'At Home in the World'

Robert Louis Stevenson's Global Literary Networks

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Summary

The peripatetic career of Robert Louis Stevenson has long been a subject of interest for scholars, with interest growing even since the conception of this study. Various Stevenson scholars have also noted the author's exploration of globalization and modernity, as it manifested in the late nineteenth century. This thesis will link these two areas of interest to explore Stevenson's engagement with the growing mobility of the late nineteenth century. Considering his lesser-known works, many of which have received little critical attention, this study will further distinguish itself from previous work on the subject by adopting a literary geographical approach; in particular I am reading Stevenson's works through the cultural geographical concept of mobility. Examining his European, American and Pacific travel writing, as well as the little-known novel *The Wrecker*, I argue that Stevenson is acutely aware of and interested in the growing and changing mobility of the time, exploring in his literary works the developments in transport driving this increased movement of people, and considering the effects on the people and places he encounters. In the final chapter I argue that *The Wrecker* is the culmination of Stevenson's varied experiences overseas, where he reflects not on the changes of place, but on how the developments in mobility have altered the nature of time and space in an increasingly connected world system.

This concern with mobility is of course linked to his own itinerancy. As arguably the first 'global' author, Stevenson wrote and published from America and the Pacific, employing the very networks of transport and communication he writes about to enable his cross-continental publishing practices. Responding to calls to widen the scope of such studies, I extend the literary geographical approach with extensive use of Stevenson's correspondence and that of his literary network. Alongside textual analysis, I will examine the production geographies and histories of his works, considering not only the influence of Stevenson's itinerancy on the literary content, but also on the production and eventual reception of his writing. I argue that this complementary, combined approach allows for greater insight into Stevenson life and works, that the ideas and meanings in these texts are intimately bound up with their geographic histories of production. The overarching aim of this thesis, then, is to examine the mobility inherent in Stevenson's works, considering both the spaces of the texts and the texts, themselves, in space.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

Listed below are abbreviations of works used recurrently throughout this thesis.

AE　　　　Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Amateur Emigrant: With Some First Impressions of America*, ed. by Julia Reid (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018)

CH　　　　Paul Maixner (ed.), *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1981)

EC　　　　Penny Fielding (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010)

IV　　　　Robert Louis Stevenson, *An Inland Voyage and Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, Tusitala Edition, vol. 17 (London: Heinemann, 1924), pp. 1–124

ISS　　　　Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, ed. by Neil Rennie (London: Penguin Books, 1998)

JSS　　　　*Journal of Stevenson Studies*

Letters　　　Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (eds), *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994–95)

SS　　　　Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Silverado Squatters', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. by James D. Hart (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 191–287

TDC　　　Robert Louis Stevenson, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes and An Amateur Emigrant*, ed. by Christopher MacLachlan (London: Penguin Classics, 2004), pp. 5–96

Wrecker　　Robert Louis Stevenson, [and Lloyd Osbourne], *The Wrecker*, Tusitala Edition, vol. 12 (London: Heinemann, 1924)

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Figure 1. Map illustrating Stevenson's global movements, 1873–94.

Introduction

> If we didn't travel now and then, we should forget what the feeling of life is. (*Letters*, I, 223)

When writing these words to Charles Baxter in 1872, Robert Louis Stevenson could not have known how far his appetite for travel would take him, nor how it would come to define his literary career. Yet even here, at the age of twenty-two, he recognised an affinity between movement and living – a conviction that would see him traverse continents and cross hemispheres, ending his life on the other side of the world from where it began. From the European journeys that engendered his early travel books, through the accounts of his voyage to and across America, to the writing born from his final years in the Pacific, an intimate connection can be traced between Stevenson's geographic peregrinations and his literary oeuvre. In recent years, and indeed since the conception of this project, scholarly interest in Stevenson's peripatetic life and career has increased considerably. Particularly notable is Richard Hill's edited collection *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity* (2017), which takes Stevenson's movement as its linking motif. Hill argues that '[m]ovement fuelled Stevenson's creative intelligence', but that 'it has taken scholarship until recently to fully appreciate the significance of this movement'.[1] Stevenson himself articulated a link between creativity and travel: writing to Sidney Colvin in 1881 from Davos, Switzerland, where he had stayed for five months, he declared that

> I have been here a little overlong. […] [S]ince I have known you, already quite a while, I have not, I believe remained so long in any one place as here in Davos. That tells on my old gipsy nature; like a violin hung up, I begin to

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[1] Richard J. Hill (ed.), 'Introduction: Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity', in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1–10 (p. 1).

> lose what music there was in me; and with the music, I do not know what
> besides, or do not know what to call it, but something radically part of life, a
> rhythm, perhaps, in one's old and so brutally overridden nerves, or perhaps a
> kind of variety of blood that the heart has come to look for. (*Letters*, III, 161)

Throughout his career, Stevenson drew inspiration for his writing from travel, his

dynamic way of living driving the 'music' or creativity that engendered his literary

practice.

As Hill states, it is only recently that the full significance of Stevenson's

mobility in relation to his literary output has begun to be explored by scholars. In the

past decade there have been a number of studies that do excellent work locating

Stevenson and his writing in 'place', examining his engagement with specific

locations through his literary works. His writings from the Pacific in particular have

received renewed critical attention, with monographs from Roslyn Jolly and Ann C.

Colley, as well as a number of shorter studies.[2] Far fewer, however, have taken

movement rather than *place* as their analytical starting point, although there are some

notable exceptions. Oliver Buckton's *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson: Travel,*

Narrative, and the Colonial Body (2007) considers the influence of travel on the

author's writing, arguing that 'travel emerges as the energizing dynamic of the

majority of Stevenson's output', and that he 'thrived on the relocations and changes

of scene incurred by travel'.[3] In Hill's recent volume, movement is considered not

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[2] Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); David Farrier, *Unsettled Narratives: The Pacific Writings of Stevenson, Ellis, Melville and London* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007); Timothy S. Hayes, '"Not So Childish as it Seems": Stevenson's Interrogation of Childishness in the South Seas', *JSS*, 9 (2012), 291–312 (p. 294); Sylvi Largeaud-Ortega, 'Who's Who in "The Isle of Voices"? How Victorian Robert Louis Stevenson Viewed Pacific Islanders' Perceptions of Victorians and of Themselves', in *Oceania and the Victorian Imagination: Where All Things Are Possible*, ed. by Richard D. Fulton and Peter H. Hoffenberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 93–105.
[3] Oliver S. Buckton, *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson: Travel, Narrative, and the Colonial Body* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), pp. 2, 4.

only from a biographical perspective but an artistic one as well, with Peter Holbrook stating:

> The sheer fact of movement is everywhere in his books; one thinks of how stable, or rooted in a particular time and place, by comparison, are the great novels of say Hardy or Eliot, where whole generations go by in one location, and in which a dominant note is that of the recurrence of natural cycles. That doesn't seem to be Stevenson's way at all, where everything is speed, mobility, lightness.[4]

This thesis also extends the focus beyond the author's geographic biography. It argues that not only is Stevenson's own mobility, and the ways this is inflected in his writing, worthy of study, but also his complex use and exploration of the concept of mobility itself in his literary works.

Indeed, one way that this project will distinguish itself from the work of Buckton and Hill is by shifting the discussion from 'travel' and 'movement' to 'mobility', as it is understood in cultural geography. While, of course, both terms are still present in my analysis, this shift broadens the focus, from Stevenson's own individual experiences of travel and the more abstract movements within his text, to the social changes and conditions affecting mobility in the late nineteenth century. Tim Cresswell, a key scholar in mobility studies, defines mobility 'as socially produced motion':

> While the abstract idea of movement is composed of equally abstract notions of absolute time and space, the notion of mobility I want to propose here, as a thoroughly social facet of life imbued with meaning and power, is composed of elements of social time and social space.[5]

In other words, to consider mobility rather than movement is to look further than the simple fact of moving from A to B, and to take account of the social practices, the politics, the narratives and the meaning behind and inherent in different mobilities. I

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[4] Peter Holbrook, 'Stevenson's Metaphysics', in *The Great Affair*, ed. by Hill, pp. 27–40 (p. 27).
[5] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge 2006), pp. 3, 4.

will discuss the concept of mobility as a theoretical framework for this thesis later in this chapter. In essence, however, reading Stevenson's literary works and career through this lens allows for an exploration of the complex ways the author engages with the burgeoning modernity of the late nineteenth century. As Cresswell states: 'Mobility seems self-evidently central to Western modernity. Indeed the word *modern* seems to evoke images of technological mobility – the car, the plane, the spaceship. It also signifies a world of increased movement of people on a global scale.'[6] In my study, I wish to argue that Stevenson is acutely aware of and interested in the growing and changing mobility of the nineteenth century, exploring in his writing the developments in transport and communication that drove an increased movement of people. Rather than simply tracing Stevenson's biographical peregrinations in relation to his literary texts, I examine his engagement with the social contexts of mobility: with how technological developments and mass migration were creating an increasingly globalised world. I argue that, with a greater understanding of Stevenson's sustained engagement with the social, economic and technological changes taking place in the late nineteenth century, and in particular those driving a growing global mobility, new and deeper meanings can be drawn from his writing.

That is not to say, however, that biographical study will not feature in this project. Indeed, while extending the analysis beyond a straightforward examination of his literary representations of places, Stevenson's own itinerancy will be a crucial structuring element of this thesis. As such, this thesis will focus on key texts written during significant geographical phases of his career: his visits first to London and then to mainland Europe; his transatlantic adventures; and his journey to the South

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[6] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 15.

Pacific. Mobility is such a key facet of Stevenson's life, and the places from which

he writes (particularly in the texts I examine) are so central to the work he produces,

that biographical material is key to any thorough study of his engagement with the

world around him. Indeed, the pervasive concern with mobility that I trace

throughout his writing is of course linked to his own itinerancy: Stevenson made

extensive use of the proliferating networks of transport and communication around

the globe even as he wrote of them. I do not include such biographical detail

uncritically: as Angharad Saunders declares, this approach 'does not mean tracing

influence from page to place, or exploring how place gets folded into fiction, but

rather, how [literary texts] articulate a geography that is peculiar to the time and

space of their creation'.[7] Again, I will explore this methodological approach in

greater detail later. It is, in fact, central to the other aspect of this thesis that

distinguishes it from similar literary geographical research or studies of Stevenson's

peripatetic career. Indeed, just as I hope, by engaging with ideas from cultural

geography, to further elucidate Stevenson's complex engagement with the rapid

developments changing the world at this time, I will also employ biographical study

and book historical approaches to examine the material conditions of an itinerant

author in the late nineteenth century.[8]

Arguably the first 'global' author, Stevenson not only *wrote* but *produced*

literary output from overseas, publishing in Britain while as far afield as California

and Samoa. In doing so, he necessarily employed the very networks of transport and

communication scrutinised in many of his texts. Alongside textual analysis, the

chapters that follow will investigate the production geographies and histories of

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[7] Angharad Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 35.
[8] As discussed in further detail in the 'Methodology' section below, this project is informed by the 'new biography' approach of James Clifford and by the work of book historical scholars such as D. F. McKenzie and Robert Darnton.

these works, considering not only the influence of Stevenson's itinerancy on the

literary content, but also on the production and reception of his writing. Stevenson's

correspondence and that of his literary network form a key primary source for my

analysis throughout each of the chapters of this project. Global postal networks were

vital for Stevenson as he travelled further afield from his friends, publishers and the

main centres of literary production. Hill explains how

> this dependence on correspondence is eerily predictive of modern
> communication and social media: today, we can simultaneously be physically
> isolated from the world while being connected to it. The postal service
> connecting Samoa with London in the 1890s is an early incarnation of the
> connected world, making Stevenson's career possible even from an
> impossibly long distance and cultural gulf.[9]

The network of postal services that proved so crucial to Stevenson likewise

depended on the developments in transport that took place in the nineteenth century,

with the proliferation of rail networks and steamships transporting the author's

letters and manuscripts halfway across the world. As I consider how these networks

and developments are explored in Stevenson's literary works, I will also examine

how the conditions in which he was operating and which enabled his cross-

continental publishing practices influenced the final texts received by readers and

studied by scholars today. This complementary, holistic approach enables greater

insights into Stevenson's life and works, revealing the extent to which the ideas and

meanings in these texts are intimately bound up with their geographic histories of

production. The overarching aim of this thesis, then, is to examine the mobility

inherent in Stevenson's works, considering both the spaces of the texts and the texts

themselves in space.

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[9] Hill, 'Introduction', p. 5.

Globalisation in the Late Nineteenth Century

> To remain stationary in these times of change, when all the world is on the move, would be a crime. Hurrah for the Trip – the cheap, cheap Trip.[10]

In 1854, Thomas Cook made this pronouncement, declaring it the slogan of the 'modern' age. While the 'Trips' to which Cook is referring here are decidedly local (he organised the first 'package' tour in 1841 between Leicester and Loughborough),[11] he also declares that 'all the world is on the move', acknowledging the global scale of the sudden intensification of mobility. As John Urry explains, 'many of the mobility-systems which are now significant date from England and France in the 1840s and 1850s'. He argues that, during what is generally known as the industrial revolution, '[n]ature [was] dramatically and systematically "mobilized"':

> Systems dating from that exceptional moment include a national post system in 1840 […], the first electrical telegram in 1839 […], the invention of photography and its use with guide books and advertising more generally […], the first Baedeker guide (about the Rhine), the first railway age and the first ever national railway timetable in 1839 (Bradshaws), the first city built for the tourist gaze (Paris), […], the first scheduled ocean steamship service (Cunard), the first railway hotel (York) […] and so on.[12]

Urry defines 'mobility-systems' as structures that 'make possible movement: they provide "spaces of anticipation" that the journey can be made, that the message will get through, that the parcel will arrive.'[13] Not coincidentally, all of the mobility-systems signposted here are also innovations significant to what we now identify as globalisation. A study of the developments in and impacts of changes to mobility is inextricably bound with issues of globalisation. While acknowledging it as 'a

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[10] Thomas Cook, quoted in Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991), p. 65.
[11] John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 14.
[12] Urry, *Mobilities*, pp. 13, 14.
[13] Urry, *Mobilities*, p. 13.

contested term, both in terms of its historical origins and defining features', Paul

Young defines globalisation

> as a process towards the integration of all global communities into a
> supposedly free-and-open world economy, a process driven by (although not
> necessarily originating with) mid-nineteenth-century industrial capitalist
> expansion, and a process characterized by the 'compression of the world and
> the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'.[14]

If the nineteenth century saw a dramatic increase in the availability and speed of

transport and communication, it is also the century, particularly in its second half,

during which the globalised world we live in today began to emerge.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I consider precisely the shift in perceptions

that Young identifies – 'the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'

– as more people began to think in worldwide terms, to consider the globe as a single

unit. Indeed, throughout the thesis, late nineteenth-century globalisation and

Stevenson's explorations of the systems and practices that produced it are central to

my analysis. Apart from Chapter One, where I examine Stevenson's early career in

Britain and the development of his first literary network, a fundamental thread

running through the chapters in this thesis is Stevenson's perception of and

participation in the process of globalisation. Even in that first chapter, I nevertheless

examine the intimate link between travel and the author's burgeoning literary career,

as well as exploring Stevenson's reflections on human mobility – albeit a slower and

more local mobility – in his early works. This project, then, imbricates the two

concepts of mobility and globalisation in its analysis, just as they have been

inextricably linked in the development of modernity since the nineteenth century.

Indeed, as Hill states, at its root '[g]lobalization is a by-product of rapid movement:

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[14] Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order*
(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 4.

movement of people, materials, information and ideas'.[15] Stevenson's interest in this

and other aspects modernity has been noted in recent scholarship: for example,

Penny Fielding identifies that, '[t]hrough Stevenson, we see the emergence of many

of the concerns that would occupy the twentieth century: psychology, globalisation,

the breakdown of racial and social classification.'[16] In the texts I consider, at least

those written after his first trip outside Europe, it is a concern with globalisation that

is most pervasive. While a number of scholars have identified this preoccupation and

explored aspects of Stevenson's engagement with the topic in shorter studies, often

focusing on one region or period of Stevenson's career in particular, this project is

the first full-length consideration of the author's exploration of and participation in

globalisation, particularly as it relates to developments in mobility.[17]

It was the acceleration of movement in the nineteenth century that

engendered the 'time–space compression' inherent in globalisation.[18] This concept

refers to the combined effects of all phenomena that condense or elide spatial and

temporal differences, such as high-speed transport or communication technology.

The first commercial electrical telegram was used in 1839 (constructed by Sir

Charles Wheatstone and Sir William Forthergill Cooke for use on the Great Western

Railway),[19] while the first underwater telegraph cable between Europe and North

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[15] Hill, 'Introduction', p. 1.

[16] Penny Fielding (ed.), 'Introduction', in *EC*, pp. 1–10 (p. 10).

[17] Jennifer Hayward, '"The Foreigner at Home"': The Travel Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson', *JSS*, 9 (2012), 233–70; Philip Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development: Spatiality, Trade, and Form in Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific Novels', in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 43 (2015), 343–56; Hill, 'Introduction', pp. 1–10. While Hill's edited collection takes movement and modernity as linking motifs, the essay format necessarily means a wide variety of subjects are considered, and the focus on Stevenson and globalisation is less sustained.

[18] The concept was first articulated by geographer David Harvey: see *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 260–83.

[19] Urry, *Mobilities*, p. 14.

America was laid in 1858, running between Ireland and Newfoundland.[20] Yet while these systems, in addition to modernised postal services and later the telephone, enabled the rapid transmissions of ideas and information, it was the increased movement of people that effected the most visible change to the world in the nineteenth century. Of course, both movements – of people and of information – are not disconnected: with increased travel and migration came an intermingling and sharing of cultures, while the postal service employed many of the same routes and technologies to carry letters as did companies that transported people. Developments in high-speed transport (such as steamships and railways) were key to both the mass movement of people and their letters; indeed, it is only owing to these proliferating networks of transport and communication that Stevenson could conduct his cross-continental publishing practices.

One of the most defining features of the nineteenth century in Europe, North America and many countries of the world is the advent and expansion of the railways. In Britain, it began with the Liverpool to Manchester line in 1830 and, by 1860, the majority of the rail network was in place. The impact on 'time–space compression' is clear: as Cresswell states, 'by 1910 all but the north of Scotland was within ten hours' travel time to London.'[21] In the early stages of his career, the railway network between Edinburgh and London was of paramount importance to Stevenson: as I examine in Chapter One, his connection with key literary figures in London launched his fledgling career, while much of his early writing depended on movement outside of Scotland. Indeed, quite apart from the exigencies of his profession, Stevenson repeatedly acknowledges his innate desire for travel, and his

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[20] David Finkelstein, 'The Globalization of the Book: 1800–1970', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. by Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 329–40 (p. 330).
[21] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 16.

dependence on the transport systems that allow it. For example in his first book, *An Inland Voyage* (1878), the author reflects on his youth in Edinburgh when he 'haunted the station, to watch train after train carry its complement of freemen into the night, and read the names of distant places on the time-bills with indescribable longings' (*IV*, 21). As well as accelerating the speed of travel, developments in railway technology also widened the access to such mobility: 'In 1835 around ten million individual coach journeys were made. Just ten years later, 30 million rail journeys were made. By 1869 the number had reached a staggering 336 million journeys.' Cresswell compares this expansion with similar developments in the United States:

> In 1850 the continental United States had 9,000 miles of track. By 1869 the figure had grown to 70,000. It was in 1869 that the transcontinental railroad was completed allowing the relatively easy travel from coast to coast for goods and people.[22]

Although Stevenson's account of his uncomfortable journey westward across America disputes the notion of 'relatively easy travel', it was this newly completed network that enabled him to reach his future wife in California, while the railway transportation of mail across the country contributed to his ability to continue to publish in Britain.

Of course, the domestic transport networks of these countries are only part of the picture. As is illustrated in the map that accompanies this Introduction (see Figure 1, above), Stevenson frequently travelled *between* countries: to continental Europe (most regularly France); across the Atlantic to the United States on two occasions; and from California to the Pacific, where he travelled throughout the region and settled in Samoa, remaining there until his death in 1894. Throughout his

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[22] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 16.

life, then, Stevenson depended not only on overland but also on maritime transport,

and both his global movements and publishing practices were greatly influenced by

technological developments in this area. Margaret Cohen describes the progress of

maritime transport, as governments, scientists and mariners worked towards making

ocean voyages safer and more predictable:

> The safety and reliability of sea travel intensified with the replacement of
> sailing by steam in commercial and military navigation. Fifty years after
> Robert Fulton's navigation of the Hudson in 1807, steamship travel was well
> on its way to supplanting sail. In 1838, two English steamships crossed the
> Atlantic in fourteen days, followed by Cunard's establishment, with an 1840
> crossing, of a Liverpool–Boston line.[23]

With a rise in reliability and safety, maritime transport became increasingly

important in passenger travel, freight transport and global communication.

By the time Stevenson first crossed the Atlantic in an iron, single-screw

steamship in 1879, the journey took only ten days.[24] In addition to his own voyage,

his letters and manuscripts that were first transported across America by train

completed their journey to Britain in steamships, taking approximately nineteen days

to travel from California to the UK. When, nine years later, Stevenson and his family

embarked from San Francisco to the Pacific Islands, it was in a schooner yacht (*The*

Casco). Yet steamships still remained an essential part of Stevenson's life in the

Pacific, heavily dependent as he was on the regularity and reliability of the mail

services. These regular, reliable networks of communication were one of the main

reasons the family chose Samoa over other islands in the region. Booth and Mehew

explain how

> the mail steamers of the Oceanic Line (*Alameda*, *Mariposa* and *Monowai*),
> plying between San Francisco and Sydney via Honolulu and Auckland, made
> monthly delivery and collection of mailbags in Samoa. […] Letters sent by
> this means took roughly a month to reach Britain: two weeks to San

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[23] Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 179.
[24] Julia Reid (ed.), 'Introduction', in *AE*, p. l.

Francisco; a week by rail across the USA to New York; and about a week to cross the Atlantic. (*Letters*, VII, 3)

While living in Samoa, Stevenson regularly complained about post going missing en route; yet mail steamers enabled him to continue to publish in both Britain and America, as well as sustain a connection with his friends back home. In addition, he and his family made a number of journeys themselves on the German steamer *Lubeck*, which ran regularly every month between Apia and Sydney via Tonga until 1893, connecting them with the Australian metropolis (*Letters*, VII, 3).

As noted earlier, one of the most notable outcomes of these developments in steamships and railway travel in the nineteenth century was mass human migration. In the following chapters, I will examine in more detail the movements of people to and within the specific regions under consideration. In Chapter Two, for instance, I explore the mass migrations to America from Europe and parts of Asia (Southern China, in particular). Chapter Three considers the influence of Western governments' interference in the Pacific but also the effects of the missionaries, traders, and 'beachcombers' who travelled to the islands, their 'quasi-colonialist' actions having a more profound initial impact than the organised colonial administration. In more general terms, however, during the nineteenth century human movement expanded on an unprecedented scale, made possible by the developments in transport already described. Steven Hahn explains how

> [w]ell over half of the entire population of Europe was on the move over the course of the nineteenth century, searching for secure berths in the rapidly changing countryside or relocating to the cities where commerce and industry offered the prospect of work. But somewhere between forty and fifty million of them left entirely, for Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and the Levant, for Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and the Caribbean basin, for South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, and, in the greatest numbers by far, for North America.[25]

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[25] Steven Hahn, *A Nation without Borders: The United States and its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830–1910* (New York: Viking, 2016), p. 346.

Indeed, approximately two-thirds of these European migrants travelled to the United

States, an influx larger than the entire US population in 1860.[26] It was not simply

northern Europeans on the move but citizens from southern and eastern Europe, as

well as southern Asia. They were, according to Hahn, 'the products – in many cases

the refugees – of forces creating new political economies across much of the globe':

> transoceanic empires; the expanding reach of international trade; the
> emancipation of peasants, slaves, and religious minorities; the ensuing
> commodification of land and labour; the industrialization of north western
> Europe; and the construction of nation-states on the European continent.[27]

While the motivations for emigrating may have been varied, each individual journey

was facilitated or expedited by the advances in transport and communication of the

nineteenth century. These changes, generating as they did an intensifying time–space

compression, brought about a rapid and intense intermingling of people and cultures,

which contributed to the formation of the globalised world we live in today.

Methodology

Literary Geography

It was within this context of global transformation that Robert Louis Stevenson was

writing. Arguably, of course, all authors writing in this age would have been

influenced by the technological developments taking place, by the shifting

composition of nations and economies, and this could be detected in their literary

works. For Stevenson, however, who participated in these movements, made

extensive use of the advances in transport and communication, and witnessed the

changes affecting different parts of the world, the significance of this context is

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[26] Hahn, *Nation without Borders*, p. 346.
[27] Hahn, *Nation without Borders*, p. 346.

correspondingly greater. Saunders states the case for investigating how such topics
are inflected in literary works, declaring:

> Writing is not a stand-alone happening; it springs from somewhere and
> something. We might variously call this inspiration, motivation or impetus,
> but remove these labels and at a more mundane level it is bound up with how
> we dwell, move and socialise within the world.

She argues for paying attention to the literary practice of authors, which includes
where they write, with whom they interact and how they bring their work to
publication, in order to 'appreciate how these practices nest inside and give shape
and substance to writing'.[28] Such methodology is aligned with the approach termed
'literary geography', which has been gaining increasing recognition within the
academy. Neal Alexander and David Cooper describe the spatial turn in literary
studies, contending that,

> thanks in part to the corresponding cultural turn in human geography, it is no
> longer necessary to insist quite so strenuously that the 'geographical
> articulations' of literature are significant in themselves; that the geographical
> *where* of place and location in literary texts affects the *what, why* and *how* of
> their cultural meanings.[29]

Aiming to contribute to this growing and fruitful exchange between literary studies
and cultural geography, this thesis will engage with concepts from this field of study
through my examination of the varied spatial dimensions of Stevenson's literary
productions.

As Alexander and Cooper note, literary geography can be articulated in a
variety of ways, 'ranging from analyses of literary representations of particular
spaces and places to studies detailing the geographies of production, circulation and
reception in which literary texts manifest themselves'.[30] Indeed, scholars within this

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[28] Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice*, p. 133.
[29] Neal Alexander and David Cooper (eds), 'Introduction: Poetry and Geography', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 1–18 (p. 1).
[30] Alexander and Cooper, 'Introduction', p. 1.

field have articulated the necessity for literary geographical studies to go beyond simply an examination of an author's representation of place. As Andrew Thacker posits, investigating 'a novel as a spatial text must amount to more than simply considering how that text represents an interesting location'. He argues instead for a critical literary geography that incorporates a 'process of reading and interpreting literary texts by reference to geographical concepts such as space and place, social space, time–space compression, and spatial history'.[31] Responding to such calls, I engage in this thesis with a number of concepts from cultural geography – particularly mobility studies, but also conceptions of place and space – in my analysis of the representations of places and global conditions in Stevenson's works. The majority of the chapters will concentrate on his travel writing, which engages directly with the geographical contexts of Stevenson's life and movements. By reading them through the prism of these geographical concepts, I hope to draw more complex meanings from Stevenson's literary representations as he responds to changes affecting the world, which we are still studying and dealing with today. I will combine this theoretical approach with a focus on the material histories and geographies of Stevenson's works, examining how his texts themselves moved through space, and how the geographical contexts in which they were written and produced influenced each final publication. By examining the literary content of Stevenson's texts alongside their material histories, this project aims to contribute to both aspects of literary geographical study that Alexander and Cooper identify at the opening of this paragraph. This holistic examination of Stevenson's works combines book historical study with close textual and theoretical analysis, the two approaches

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[31] Andrew Thacker, 'The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography', *New Formations*, 57 (2006), 56–73 (pp. 63, 60).

linked under the wider field of literary geography and the overarching rubric of the spatial.

In my account of Stevenson's representations of place, then, I will be considering geographical location as far more significant than simply the backdrop or setting for his writing. Sheila Hones observes how past approaches to the geography of literary texts have 'grasped space as a container and focused on setting as the background to action', calling instead for 'a more complex appreciation of the ways in which text and space, fiction and location, might be understood as inseparable and co-productive.'[32] My conception of space and place – and how it can be understood to interact with literary output – is influenced by approaches in cultural geography. Scholars within this discipline have for some time distinguished between *space* and *place*, with place often defined 'as a spatial location invested with human meaning'.[33] If, then, we can describe place as space to which meaning had been ascribed, this meaning is not fixed or constant, but susceptible to influence and change. Doreen Massey is one of the founding proponents of such spatial theory: she suggests that '*in principle* the conception of places as bounded and undisturbed is incorrect'.[34] Instead of thinking of places as areas surrounded by boundaries, Massey argues that 'they can be imagined as articulated movements in networks of social relations and understandings.'[35] It is such an understanding of place as essentially porous and interlinked that I employ throughout this study.

This networked conception recognises place as more than a background in which events happen: rather, it sees place as made up of various trajectories – be

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[32] Sheila Hones, 'Literary Geography: Setting and Narrative Space', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 12.7 (2011), 685–99 (p. 686).
[33] Alexander and Cooper, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[34] Doreen Massey (ed.), 'The Conceptualization of Place', in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 46–79 (p. 64).
[35] Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', *Marxism Today*, 38 (1991), 24–29 (p. 28).

they trajectories of people, objects, ideas and capital or flows of water, rock and air.

Place is constructed as the result of these trajectories intersecting, or, as David

Lambert and Alan Lester put it, '[i]n their ever-changing coming together, they

produce combinations that are unique and thus give "character" to each place.'[36]

Such an understanding, then, necessarily extends my analysis of Stevenson's texts

beyond location as background. If place is a web of multiple networks of people and

ideas, then it can influence and interact with literature in many varied and complex

ways. Place can shape all aspects of the creation of a literary text: conception,

writing, production and circulation. And in the work itself, the geographical context

acts as far more than just the setting: it is a multifaceted agent, neither consistent nor

passive, but actively contributing to narrative and meaning. This way of conceiving

place is also particularly relevant to the era and ideas under consideration: my study

focuses on the second half of the nineteenth century, when the dynamic forces of

modernity driving globalisation were changing the nature of towns, cities and

countries at an unprecedented rate, emphasising the essential openness and volatility

of place. Indeed, it is in response to our increased understanding of the causes and

effects of globalisation that Massey advocates this 'new sense of place': 'Can't we

rethink our sense of place? Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive;

not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking? A sense of place which is

adequate to this era of time–space compression.'[37] While Massey is referring to late

twentieth-century time–space compression, her comment holds as true for

Stevenson's lifetime as for ours: as I argue in Chapter Two, it is one which

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[36] David Lambert and Alan Lester, *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 14.
[37] Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', p. 28.

Introduction

Stevenson himself begins to articulate as he witnesses the profound changes shaping

different parts the world.

Mobilities

The other key area from cultural geography that informs this thesis is mobility

studies. I have already described how scholars working in this field distinguish

mobility from *movement*, conceiving of the former as 'socially produced motion'.[38]

Another way to explain this idea is to compare it to the distinction between *space*

and *place*. As elucidated above, place is abstract space that has been assigned

meaning. Movement, then, is the equivalent of abstract space, 'contentless,

apparently natural, and devoid of meaning, history and ideology', while mobility can

be seen as 'the dynamic equivalent of *place*'.[39] Movement becomes mobility when

we consider the history and ideology behind and alongside it, whether this be of

local, individual significance, or tied up with demands of trade and capital, or else

the various forms of patriarchy, colonialism and imperialism. Urry delineates how,

just as literary studies and other humanities disciplines experienced a 'spatial turn',

the social sciences marshalled

> a 'mobility turn', a different way of thinking through the character of
> economic, social and political relationships. Such a turn is spreading in and
> through the social sciences, mobilizing analyses that have been historically
> static, fixed and concerned with predominately a-spatial 'social structures'.[40]

At a fundamental level, the mobilities paradigm critiques social science as static and

'sedentarist', arguing that even after the spatial turn there has been little emphasis on

the mobile interactions and connections in and between spaces. It can be argued that

research intending to engage with a specific place and time falls short if it does not

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[38] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 3.
[39] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 3.
[40] Urry, *Mobilities*, p. 6.

consider movement. After all, as Cresswell states, 'mobility is central to what it is to be human. It is a fundamental geographical facet of existence and, as such, provides a rich terrain from which narratives – and, indeed, ideologies – can be, and have been, constructed'.[41]

Studies of mobility are necessarily extensive and varied. In this thesis, I consider mobility in relation to individual and national identity, mobile communities, migration and transport, imperial enterprise, and global systems of time and space. All these topics, however, share a focus on the meaning within and behind movement, whether individual, technological or political. While research into Stevenson's engagement with geography or place could take his mobility for granted, acknowledging only the fact that he moved, interested only in that it creates links between places in which he lived or travelled, this project examines the meanings behind that mobility itself. Indeed, in the dynamic age of modernity, which began in earnest during Stevenson's lifetime, it is not implausible to argue that mobility is a more appropriate analytical starting point than place. Ernst van Alphen suggests that research examining or taking into account cultural issues faces a challenge in the context of modernity. He posits that over the past 150 years it has become 'more and more difficult to see peoples or cultures as identifiable spots on a map', arguing that 'the relationship between place and culture has become one of disconnection, displacement, and incommensurability'.[42] For many people and communities, of course, place it still a significant anchor of culture, even to the most local level of particular areas or streets in a city. Yet after over a century and a half of ongoing, multi-directional migration, it is no longer possible to take for granted

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[41] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 1.
[42] Ernst van Alphen, 'Imagined Homelands: Re-Mapping Cultural Identity', in *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World*, ed. by Tim Cresswell and Ginette Verstraete (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 53–70 (p. 55).

the belief that nation states embody culture, or to assume that any place is not in

some way hybrid in terms of culture. While such certainty may never have existed, it

is entirely discredited in our mobile age. Cresswell concurs, suggesting that culture

'no longer sits in places, but is hybrid, dynamic, more about routes than roots. The

social is no longer seen as bound by "societies", but as caught up in an array of

twenty-first century mobilities.'[43]

Yet even in an era apparently defined by dynamism, when to be 'modern' is,

among other things, to be mobile, certain types and aspects of mobility are still

treated with intense suspicion. In the twenty-first century, a rise in far-right politics

in various countries is moving the world further from the progressive ideal of global

freedom of movement. In the first decades of this millennium, moral panics ranging

from refugees seeking asylum to the threat of global terrorism have led nations to

impose stricter barriers on entrance, and even to a proliferation in the number of

barriers built to prevent people from travelling on foot across borders.[44] However,

such fear and suspicion directed towards mobility is not unique to our time of

dynamic modernity. In his study into the figure of the tramp in America, Cresswell

explains that this reaction is not only linked to specific conditions but is also a

pervasive moral idea that can be traced through different ages and particular

histories.[45] He suggests that '[p]lace, home and roots are profoundly moral concepts

in the humanist lexicon':

> Philosophically, much of the moral value of place is rooted in the work of
> Martin Heidegger, who argued, through his conception of 'dwelling', that to

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[43] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 1.

[44] The construction of border barriers increased in the early 2000s; in fact, half of all the border barriers built since World War II were built after 2000. See Uri Friedman, 'A World of Walls', *The Atlantic* (2016) <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/05/donald-trump-wall-mexico/483156/> [accessed 20 January 2019]. See also Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (London: Verso, 2016).

[45] In Chapter One, I examine the figure of the vagabond, a mobile person feared by society in medieval Britain.

> be human is to have a place, to be rooted. Heidegger equated 'place' with 'being' through the concept of 'dwelling'. He was terrified by the speed and mobility of the modern world and chose, in theory at least, to retreat into a sense of rootedness in place in a Black Forest cabin. In his cabin he asserted the possibility of achieving a unity between people and things that is summed up with the word 'authentic'. The world of motion, to Heidegger and his followers, was one that threatened authentic existence and was thus deeply suspect.[46]

Place, home and settledness, then, are related to ideas of attachment and commitment, associations which inevitably reduce mobility to a morally ambiguous 'other', linked instead to apathy and deviance.

As a highly mobile person himself, Stevenson explores mistrust towards mobility in many of his literary works. In *An Inland Voyage* (1878), he adopts the persona of a pedlar as he moves through the Franco-Belgian countryside, reflecting on the negative reactions from the locals towards such peripatetic people. During his first trip to America, he witnesses the prejudices faced by economic migrants, while, in his novel *The Wrecker* (1892), he explores the fears surrounding the increase in high-speed transport during the late nineteenth century. Yet just as suspicions towards mobility feature in much of his writing, it is also evident in Stevenson's own life and in the publication histories of some of his texts. In Chapter Two in particular, when I consider his unexpected and indefinite first journey to America, I suggest that his friends' negative reactions to the writing he produced there were entwined with their unease at his mobility, which disturbed their notions of how and where a 'man of letters' should exist. The vexed publication history of *The Amateur Emigrant* (1895) is, in part, a reflection of this contentious initial response to the work. Indeed, many of the texts examined in this thesis encountered contentious, or at least unusual, routes to publication. My focus on these works is partly, of course,

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[46] Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 15.

because such texts can offer richer lines of analysis from a book historical

perspective. Yet it is also because they are some of his most mobile texts, written

whilst moving, often about moving, and are highly mobile objects themselves during

their various stages of production. With the exception of the early travel books I

examine in Chapter One, this thesis considers texts written on a different continent to

where they were produced and published, these geographical conditions bringing

their own inevitable barriers and complications. Retaining a close focus on issues of

mobility, and within a networked view of space and place, I will examine

Stevenson's own literary and social networks as they spread across the world, as

well as the wider networks of transport and communication that facilitated (and

frustrated) his writing and publishing practices.

Biographical Study

An investigation into these complex publishing histories, then, necessarily involves a

close focus on the author's biography. Although published towards the latter stages

of this project, Angharad Saunders's *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice* (2018)

provides a useful model for my own methodology. Saunders articulates how many

literary geographical approaches have 'tended to follow the thinking of reader-

response criticism, where emphasis is placed on the agency of the reader and their

interaction with the text as a finished product':

> Little attention has been directed to the 'other side' – to the intersection and
> distribution of social agencies that occur in, or are pivotal to, the creative
> process and the making of a text as a material entity. It is timely, therefore, to
> return to the world before the text and resuscitate the writers who reside
> therein, for this is a lived world we know little about and it is not one that is
> wholly separate to the imagined world of the text.[47]

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[47] Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice*, p. xvi.

Introduction

In the chapters that follow, I investigate Stevenson's literary practice, conceptualised as more than the physical act of putting pen to paper and involving, instead, the wider applications and practices of authorship, the wider lived experiences of the author. In other words, it pivots, as Saunders states, on the understanding of the 'writer's geography as something that exceeds the spatial references and inferences of their texts',[48] and a recognition that an examination of his wider literary practices can reveal potentially unexplored dimensions of the work.

Research that considers questions of biography is often viewed with suspicion in literary studies, perhaps owing to the potential for isolating analysis on individual subjects, conceptualising people as coherent entities moving through life, unimpacted by external forces. Nonetheless, as Saunders observes, 'biographical studies are increasingly recognising complexity over coherence and celebrating the interdependencies and kaleidoscopic nature of multiple lives'.[49] One of the earliest proponents of the 'new biography' approach was James Clifford, who called for a 'less centred biography' that dispels the 'myth of personal coherence'.[50] He does not imply that biography 'should attempt to dissolve the individual, only that the nearer the background can be brought to the lived surface, the better'.[51] Individuals, seen from this approach, become more open and less complete: they are 'meeting points for influences, no longer static but mobile, effusive, decentred, a process not a thing'.[52] Rather than considering Stevenson as an isolated author with total personal

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[48] Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice*, p. xxvii.
[49] Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice*, p. xxvii.
[50] James Clifford, '"Hanging Up Looking Glasses at Odd Corners": Ethnobiographical Prospects', in *Studies in Biography*, ed. by Daniel Aaron (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 41–56 (p. 46, 52).
[51] Clifford, 'Hanging Up Looking Glasses at Odd Corners', p. 46.
[52] Michael Shortland and Richard Yeo (eds), 'Introduction', in *Telling Lives in Science: Essays on Scientific Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1–44 (p. 14).

agency, a focus on both the geographical and social environments in which he writes recasts him as a mobile site, influenced by the people and places he encounters.

The decentred biographical approach this project adopts complements and is linked to the close focus on Stevenson's geography. Influenced by the work of Clifford (on 'new biography') and Massey (on conceptions of place as open and fluid), David Lambert and Alan Lester propose the idea of studying and writing 'life geographies' as well as life histories. Such an approach involves evoking 'a sense of the spatial not simply as the location of, or backdrop to, a life, […] but rather as co-constitutive with selfhood and identity'.[53] Lester explains that 'tracking the life geography of any individual means appreciating the relationships between that individual's continually reconstituted subjectivity, the places in which s/he dwelt, and the spaces through which s/he moved.'[54] Following Clifford, life geography provides a decentred approach to the individual, bringing the 'background' of a life into focus and considering the influence of a person's changing environment on their shifting subjectivity. This concept aligns with the calls in literary geography to view location in texts as more than simply the background to action, but as inseparable from the narrative and meaning. It also lends itself to the conception of place as open, porous and mobile. Indeed, in her writing about the need to rethink our sense of place, Massey widens her discussion to suggest there are 'significant reservations to be made of any concept of identity (whether of person or place) which sees it as essentially bounded in the sense of closed off from the outside.'[55] Massey contends that people are changed by place, but 'not through some visceral belonging (some

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[53] Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives*, p. 23.
[54] Alan Lester, 'Relational Space and Life Geographies in Imperial History: George Arthur and Humanitarian Governance', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 21.2 (2010), 29–46 (p. 30).
[55] Massey, 'Conceptualization of Place', p. 67.

barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the *practising* of

place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation

is forced upon us.'[56] This study, then, combines an open conception of place with a

decentred approach to biography, considering how Stevenson's negotiations of place

and movement influenced the varied aspects of his literary productions.

Book Historical Approaches

One way in which this thesis works towards a 'less centred' biographical approach is

through a consistent focus on the role of Stevenson's social and professional

networks on his literary output. As Fielding observes, the writer in Stevenson's day

'was not the lonely Romantic figure, working in isolation, but one actively engaged

in the production of social and cultural values.' She argues that '[p]articipation in the

production of late nineteenth-century literature, then, is a social event or

performance, and this element of social performativity often extends into the self-

consciously stylised rhetoric of the men of letters.'[57] In Chapter One, I examine the

London literary circle Stevenson entered in his first years of authorship, considering

the environment cultivated by these 'men of letters' and the influence this scene and

these contacts had on his early career. It was during these formative years that

Stevenson built his first literary network, many members of which he remained

connected to throughout his peripatetic life. Indeed, through each of the chapters of

this thesis runs a close examination of the way his literary friends and contacts aided,

influenced and disrupted the production of his texts, particularly while he was

geographically separated from them and the places of publication.

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[56] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 154.
[57] Fielding, 'Introduction', p. 2.

Introduction

As Saunders notes, there has, in recent years, been a growing recognition in literary studies 'of writing as an outcome of social relationships, or, put another way, as a social practice in which authority is distributed between numerous agents'.[58] Such recognition derives largely from the book historical work and textual scholarship of writers like D. F. McKenzie and Robert Darnton, among others. McKenzie's concept of the 'sociology of the text' argued that texts are the result of a collaborative process and called for analytical methods that paid attention to the production and reception of the material object, rather than just the literary content.[59] In an effort to produce a unifying methodological starting point for book historical studies, Robert Darnton proposed a 'communication circuit' as a model for analysing the lifecycle of a book, running 'from the author to the publisher […], the printer, the shippers, the bookseller, and the reader'.[60] Darnton adds that he is 'not arguing that book history should be written according to a standard formula but trying to show how disparate segments can be brought together within a single conceptual scheme'.[61] Indeed, the coherent path this circuit traces between author and publisher was regularly disturbed in Stevenson's case: his itinerant and international publishing practices were facilitated and subverted by family, friends and advisors, his formal and informal literary agents, not to mention the non-human actors in the forms of global transport and communication. Nevertheless, such scholarship signalled a recognition of the variety of agents and practices involved in the production of literary texts and the valuable insights such a focus could garner. This

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[58] Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice*, p. xxiv.
[59] D. F. McKenzie, 'The Sociology of the Text: Orality, Literary and Print in Early New Zealand', *The Library*, 6.4 (1984), 333–65.
[60] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 11.
[61] Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books', in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 9–26 (p. 17).

project is influenced by these book historical approaches: it will examine the distribution of authority between external agents in relation to Stevenson's output, considering the compositional processes of the texts 'not as a linear undertaking, in which others exist purely in the shadows and engage only at set moments, in certain ways and with certain intentions, but as more discontinuous, spontaneous and everyday practice.'[62]

The key source of information in my analysis of Stevenson's literary practice is his correspondence. This project is greatly indebted to Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew's 1994–95 collection of Stevenson's letters, an edition comprising over 2800 letters, almost two-thirds of which had not appeared in print before. As Colley states, Stevenson was 'a devoted correspondent who daily composed letters (even when desperately ill and scribbling notes in his sickbed).'[63] Indeed, written correspondence was a vital form of communication for Stevenson throughout his life, but in particular when he was geographically distant from his friends and family. His dependence on global postal networks was professional as well as personal: whether residing in Edinburgh or southern France, California or Samoa, Stevenson conducted the business of professional authorship almost entirely via post. These practices included posting manuscripts and proofs (and receiving edited copies in return), negotiating with publishers, sending instructions to his literary friends and contacts, receiving their critiques and published reviews, and, on many occasions, complaining about the inevitable challenges of itinerant or long-distance authorship. As already detailed, Stevenson used the routes opening up by the developments in transport and communication to accomplish this feat. Even with

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[62] Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice*, p. xxiv–xxviii.
[63] Ann C. Colley, 'Twaddle and Lies: Letters in Stevenson's Later Fiction', in *Stevenson and the Great Affair*, ed. by Hill, pp. 89–103 (p. 89).

these advances in technology, however, it would almost certainly have been impossible without the literary network he established in London during the first years of his career, and without the support of his friends, many of whom acted, at different times of his life, as unofficial literary agents. Particularly significant figures were Sidney Colvin, W. E. Henley and Charles Baxter, whose relationships with Stevenson and influence on his career I explore throughout the thesis. The entire collection of his correspondence, however, provides an invaluable archive of details regarding the literary world of the late nineteenth century and, more specifically, a rich source from which to examine Stevenson's literary practices through the textual traces of his life.

Stevenson's Literary Geographies

Reading the colossal collection of Stevenson's letters, which fill eight large volumes spanning forty years, it is clear that even the author himself does not subscribe to 'the myth of personal coherence' that Clifford criticises in traditional biographical study. Writing to Henley in 1879, shortly after reaching America on his first trip outside of Europe, Stevenson declared:

> I fear this can hardly be called a letter. To say truth, I feel already a difficulty of approach; I do not know if I am the same man I was in Europe, perhaps I can hardly claim acquaintance with you. My head went round and looks another way now. (*Letters*, III, 16)

Stevenson recognised how experiences and new environments can change a person and, as I explore in Chapter Two, a discernible change in his writing took place during and after this significant journey. Indeed, albeit in different ways, each chapter of this thesis will argue that Stevenson's writing was shaped by his experiences of the places he moved through. Looking at his works and letters holistically, shifts in Stevenson's political views are evident. Oliver Buckton notes a

move to a more conservative ideology between *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and

Treasure Island (1883):

> Abandoning the critique of bourgeois values apparent in *An Inland Voyage*,
> Stevenson jumped aboard the vessel of British imperial romance with his first
> novel. Significantly, Stevenson's attitudes toward colonial ideology hardened
> somewhat around the same time as the publication of *Treasure Island*, the
> turning point in this shift in attitudes being the crisis in the Sudan in the early
> 1880s, coinciding with the composition and publication of his first novel.[64]

The ideological difference between these two relatively early texts, however, is far

less pronounced than the shift between his early sentiments towards empire and his

approach to the subject in his writing from the Pacific.

Indeed, while *An Inland Voyage* certainly critiques bourgeois values or, as

Stevenson puts it, 'the mercantile spirit' (*IV*, 103), it also demonstrates a certain

commitment to colonial ideologies. As the narrator, Stevenson declares

> we shall never know we are Englishmen until we have lost India.
> Independent America is still the cross of my existence; [...] and I never feel
> more warmly to my own land than when I see the Stars and Stripes, and
> remember what our empire might have been. (pp. 55–56)

Such statements make uncomfortable reading for those that claim, as I do later in this

thesis, that Stevenson was a progressive thinker who critiqued the Western imperial

mission when he encountered it in the Pacific. This feeling is heightened when read

alongside anecdotes from his letters where he defends the role of the British Empire:

in a letter to his father in 1874, he described quarrelling with an American,

'thundering anathemas in the moonlight against all those that were not friends of

England' (*Letters*, I, 465). In his Silverado Journal, written while in California in

1880 he declared: 'I am a Briton, and live and move in our national achievements'.[65]

Such pronouncements in the first half of his career, however, effectively demonstrate

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[64] Buckton, *Cruising with Stevenson*, p. 28.
[65] James D. Hart (ed.), 'Introduction', in *From Scotland to Silverado* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard
University Press, 1966), pp. xiii–li (p. xlvii).

the shift in Stevenson's perspective as he travelled more widely and experienced

more of the world. After his arrival in the Pacific, such national pride and certainty

in empire began to dissipate, as he witnessed the harsh realities of Western

involvement in the region. In a letter to Colvin in 1888 he describes his visit to the

Marquesas Islands, a French colony that offered him more complex insights into the

nature of empire: 'I shouldn't wonder if there came trouble here someday […]: I

could name a nation that is not beloved in certain islands, – and it does not know it!

Strange: like ourselves, perhaps, in India!' (*Letters*, VI, 206). His letters of travel

from the region, posthumously published in book form as *In the South Seas* (1896),

reveal Stevenson's growing scepticism, examining the cultural erosion and

depopulation affecting many of the islands.

The shift in perspective became more pronounced after he settled in Samoa

and became embroiled in the island's politics: *A Footnote to History* is, as it states

on the first page, 'a piece of contemporary history', documenting the ongoing

conflict between the three colonial powers and the indigenous factions to gain

control of the country.[66] Stevenson's support was for the Samoans' preferred king,

Mataafa, and the book, alongside his numerous letters to *The Times*, attempted not

only to document but also to influence the turbulent political situation. Indeed, only

months after his death, *The Times* published a letter from George Forbes who had

visited Stevenson in Samoa in 1894, testifying to the author's commitment to this

conflict:

> The thing that struck me most, and which interests the world, was the
> absorption of his mind […] in the injustice and cruelty which was being
> committed on that splendid race by the impossible attempt of a government
> by the Consuls of three Powers. […] His views were given in your columns;
> and when I saw him he was far more influenced by a desire to save the native

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[66] Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Footnote to History and Vailima Papers* (Newcastle: Cambridge
Scholars Publishing, 2009), p. 34.

race than by literary ambition. Perhaps his influence in this direction may
live.[67]

It is certainly true that Stevenson set aside 'literary ambition', or at least commercial
appeal, in *A Footnote to History*: he termed it 'a piece of journalism' and questioned
whether 'anyone [would] ever read it?', before concluding: 'I fancy not' (*Letters*,
VII, 219, 218).

It is to account for and explore the changes in Stevenson's writing over the
course of his life that this project considers texts that span the length of his literary
career. Starting with his first book *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and ending with *The
Wrecker* (1892), published two years before his death, the thesis also selects works
from the key geographical regions of his life: Western Europe, the United States and
the Pacific islands. While the majority of studies into Stevenson's work focus on
one time period or one geographic region, my attention to mobility has necessitated
a wider lens for this project. Indeed, *mobility* is a key factor in the choice of works.
The first three chapters consider Stevenson's travel writing from Europe, America
and the Pacific – a genre where one would expect mobile narratives. Yet *An Inland
Voyage*, *The Amateur Emigrant* and Stevenson's Californian essays[68] also take
mobility as a key focus, exploring questions of human movement specific to their
respective regions. While largely composed during Stevenson's cruises through the
islands, *In the South Seas* is notable for the *lack* of detail provided regarding his own
travels – an absence, I will argue, that reflects the author's unconventional
conception of the region. Indeed, it is the unequal access to mobility and the
restrictions imposed by colonial powers on a previously mobile population that this

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[67] George Forbes, 'Robert Louis Stevenson', *The Times*, 4 January 1895, p. 9.
[68] The Californian essays I examine are 'The Old Pacific Capital' (1880) and 'A Modern
Cosmopolis' (1883), as well as *The Silverado Squatters* (1884) and the second part of *The Amateur
Emigrant*, 'Across the Plains' (1883).

text depicts, alongside the uneven geographic development of globalisation.

In the final chapter, I consider *The Wrecker,* not a travel book and yet one of Stevenson's most mobile narratives, whose characters travel between Europe, America and the Pacific multiple times. Yet it is not only the characters that move around the globe: the text itself was incredibly mobile in both the composition and production process, begun while Stevenson cruised the Pacific islands and posted in portions between Samoa, Britain and America. Even the joint authorship of the novel contributes to its mobile origins, moving between writers just as it is posted between continents. As Ian Duncan states, possibly the most similar work in terms of narrative movement and the composition process is *The Dynamiter* (1885), which ranges 'across time, geography and even different genres (not to mention authors)'.[69] The majority of the text, however, was written while Stevenson himself was relatively static, during a period of ill health when he was often confined to Skerryvore, his house in Bournemouth. In contrast, like many of the texts studied in this thesis, *The Wrecker* was written and produced in conditions of intense movement, adding additional layers of interest to an analysis of the text.

Another rationale for my choice of works is their relative lack of critical attention. Indeed, the case could still be made for Stevenson as an author whose wider oeuvre has been relatively neglected by literary scholarship. Among the reading public he is largely remembered today for two or three books: *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde*. Even these seem to have become curiously detached from Stevenson's authorship: the one-legged man with a parrot is now considered the conventional image of a pirate rather than the specific features of Long John Silver, while the concept of a 'Jekyll and Hyde' archetype has

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[69] Ian Duncan, 'Stevenson and Fiction', in *EC*, ed. by Fielding, pp. 11–26 (p. 24).

become so ingrained in our cultural imagination that many are unaware of its literary

origins. Critically, Stevenson was excluded from *The Great Tradition* (1948) by F.

R. Leavis and, as Duncan argues, his 'absence from standard surveys and field

anthologies appears to confirm his relegation by academic scholars and critics to the

status of a minor author'.[70] Of course, within Stevenson studies and wider

scholarship on late nineteenth-century literature, he is known as far more than the

author of those three works of fiction. Yet even within these communities, the texts I

consider have been studied less than his more established work. In 2012 Jennifer

Hayward wrote that

> apart from Roslyn Jolly's *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific*, Oliver S.
> Buckton's *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson*, and Caroline McCracken-
> Flesher's chapter 'Travel Writing' in the *Edinburgh Companion to Robert
> Louis Stevenson*, little sustained critical attention has been paid to
> Stevenson's travel writing.[71]

Indeed, Hayward's own examination of his Californian essays is one of the few

pieces of academic writing on these neglected texts.

Equally, *The Wrecker*, which had been long dismissed as a 'failure' by

critics,[72] has not experienced the same surge in interest over the past decade as much

of his other Pacific fiction, whose focus on island cultures and politics lend

themselves better to a postcolonial analysis. There have, of course, in recent years,

been individual publications contributing new and insightful readings of these works.

In addition to those referenced by Hayward, notable contributions include Julia

Reid's new edition of *The Amateur Emigrant*, as well as essays by Phillip Steer and

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[70] Duncan, 'Stevenson and Fiction', p. 11.
[71] Hayward, 'Foreigner at Home', p. 234.
[72] Stephen Arata examines this critical dismissal, in particular Frank McLynn's assessment of the novel as a failure: see 'Stevenson's Careful Observances', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 47 (2007) <https://doi.org/10.7202/016704ar> (para. 7 of 33).

Caroline McCracken-Flesher, which elaborate spatial readings of *The Wrecker*.[73] Yet while interest in these texts continues to grow, there remains a great deal of scope for further academic work: scope, in particular, for studies that ask what these works reveal about Stevenson and the age in which he lived, about late nineteenth-century authorship, about the changing dynamics of global culture and about Stevenson's negotiation of these shifts in his literary works.

Of course, it is Stevenson's profile as a 'global' author that makes him a clear choice for a study of the changing dynamics of international authorship at this time. Many writers travelled during the nineteenth century, writing as they moved and publishing their reflections on the journey when they returned, or inflecting their fiction with the places they had been. Anthony Trollope, for example, was a great traveller by Victorian standards: in 1871 he visited Australia, writing the novel *Lady Anna* (1874) on the voyage and publishing it, alongside a book entitled *Australia and New Zealand* (1873), when he returned. While this history of mobile composition is interesting, Trollope waited until he returned to publish the book; unlike Stevenson, he did not need to publish immediately, for he was not immediately dependent on the proceeds of his literary career. In fact, he travelled most often as part of his other career, as a surveyor's clerk for the General Post Office. It is not only Stevenson's travels, and his literary representations of them, that are of interest: it is also the production of his texts from overseas, his reliance on global networks of transport and communication to connect him with the main centres of literary production. Another possible comparison is with Charles Dickens: John McBratney describes how 'Dickens was fascinated, particularly in his later novels, by the increased

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[73] Phillip Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development: Spatiality, Trade, and Form in Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific Novels', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 43 (2015), 343–56; Caroline McCracken-Flesher, '*The Wrecker*: Unplacing Space in the South Seas', in *Stevenson and the Great Affair*, ed. by Hill, pp. 41–55.

movement of human beings across national borders propelled by travel, imperial

expansion and overseas emigration during the nineteenth century'.[74] In particular,

Little Dorrit (1855–57), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1860–

61) are concerned with migration to and from Britain. Dickens had, of course,

travelled to America and had published his *American Notes for General Circulation*

(1842) on his return. Unlike Stevenson, however, he had neither travelled *with*

emigrants in the steerage class of the ship nor across the plains to the West in an

emigrant train. He did not publish while in the country and did not use the same

systems of transport to send his literary work back to Britain. It is these features of

Stevenson's life and career that make him such a rich case study when investigating

the interlinked topics of mobility, globalisation and authorship in the late nineteenth

century.

Chapter Overview

The majority of the chapters in this thesis consider works that were produced while

Stevenson was overseas. If not actually published while he was abroad, they were at

least posted to Britain as part of the initial production process, to be read and

critiqued by his literary friends and advisors. The exception is in Chapter One, which

examines the first years of Stevenson's career between 1876 and 1879. Despite

frequent trips to France during this time, his primary residence was the family home

in Edinburgh. The central literary text considered in this chapter is his first book *An

Inland Voyage* (1878), as well as, more briefly, his other work of European travel

Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes (1879). *An Inland Voyage* documents

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[74] John McBratney, 'The Return and Rescue of the Émigré in *A Tale of Two Cities*', in *Victorian Settler Narratives: Emigrants, Cosmopolitans and Returnees in Nineteenth Century Literature*, ed. by Tamara S. Wagner (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), pp. 99–109 (pp. 99–100).

Stevenson's twenty-day canoe trip through Belgium and France with his friend

Walter Simpson, while *Travels with a Donkey* is a record of his twelve-day walking

tour of the Cévennes, accompanied only by the donkey Modestine. Stevenson wrote

notes in a journal during both journeys, the short durations of which made sending

work back to be read unnecessary. Although they do not share the same complex

geographies of production as his later overseas texts, these works demonstrate the

significance of travel and mobility from the outset of his literary career. Indeed, both

trips documented in these books were, as Stevenson himself declared, made

specifically with the resulting works in mind. Buckton argues that

> the appearance at the beginning of Stevenson's career of *An Inland Voyage* –
> his actual first book – and *Travels with a Donkey* reveals that the impetus to
> produce narratives based on his journeys was fundamental to his professional
> activity, and this original interest in travel would continue to direct his course
> in fiction and nonfiction.[75]

Building on Buckton's work, this chapter looks beyond the significance of

Stevenson's own journey in the construction of the text, to consider the wider

thematic significance of mobility. In *An Inland Voyage*, not only is his movement the

driving force of the narrative, but mobility is a central conceptual focus. Mobile

people (bargees, pedlars, travelling artists) are repeatedly scrutinised as points of

interest and analysis. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, global mobility

becomes a central concern in Stevenson's later writing, as he witnesses and employs

the developments in high-speed transport. In his first book, however, his focus falls

on slow, local movement, exploring the romantic freedoms of a mobile life and

society's attitudes towards people who choose mobility over settledness.

I extend Buckton's thesis further in Chapter One by examining Stevenson's

mobility beyond the journeys documented in his first two travel books,

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[75] Buckton, *Cruising with Stevenson*, p. 2.

demonstrating the formative influence of travel on the author's early career. His first

paid publications were equally tied up with movement: 'Roads' (1873) is a reflection

on the appeal of the horizon for travellers, while 'Ordered South' is a literary

account of Stevenson's journey to and five-month stay in the popular convalescent

town Menton, in southern France. However, it was a trip to Suffolk in 1873 that

proved one of the most significant journeys of his life: here, he met Sidney Colvin,

already an established figure in London's literary milieu, whose advice and

introductions facilitated Stevenson's first steps into professional authorship. Indeed,

one of the purposes of this chapter is to locate Stevenson's position in the literary

environment in which he began his career, examining the development of the early

literary network that would later help facilitate his itinerant, cross-continental writing

and publishing practices. I examine his progression in this arena that is dominated by

the figure of 'the man of letters', considered through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of

the 'field of cultural production'. Here, I argue that Colvin in particular adds value to

Stevenson's work by investing it with the 'symbolic capital' he has acquired in the

field, thereby facilitating the fledgling author's integration into the intellectual and

literary circles of London.[76] This chapter also unpicks Stevenson's own volatile

conception of his new position within this world, through close readings of his

correspondence and *An Inland Voyage*. At this uncertain stage of his career, I argue

that his unstable and contradictory conceptions of authorship reflect the tensions

between upholding the image of a 'man of letters' and the economic realities of the

literary profession at this time.

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[76] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. by Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 77.

Chapter One continues by considering the years leading to Stevenson's departure for America, examining the differences between his authorial persona in *Travels with a Donkey* compared to his first book, alongside his interactions with key figures in the literary profession, to demonstrate his growing confidence and understanding of the market. Nonetheless, I also argue that Stevenson reveals himself to be not entirely comfortable in the London world of letters. Considering descriptions from his friends about his behaviour during this period, as well as his own statements regarding the differences between the English and the Scots in 'The Foreigner at Home' (1882), it becomes clear that Stevenson did not easily assimilate to this metropolitan society of literary coteries and dining clubs. The author also, however, had a vexed relationship with Edinburgh throughout his life and expressed himself particularly vehemently against his home town in letters from this period, proclaiming in 1874 to 'hate the place now to the backbone' (*Letters*, II, 1). Indeed, I will argue that, for Stevenson, remaining in Edinburgh was seen as counteractive to the professional identity he wished to embody, not only owing to its distance from the main centre of late nineteenth-century literary production (London), but in consequence of Stevenson's own clear association of writing with travel. His early career was defined by mobility to such an extent that geographic stasis, and therefore his home in Edinburgh, became disassociated from professional growth or success for Stevenson. In fact, given his discomfort in both London and Edinburgh, I suggest that Stevenson's authorial identity is more aligned to the state of itinerancy than to any specific city or country – a sense that remained with him throughout, and perhaps prepared him for, his future peripatetic career.

Chapter Two examines the period from August 1879 to August 1880, when Stevenson left Europe for the first time to pursue Fanny Osbourne to California,

marrying her in May 1880. Enduring ten days of travel on a steamship from

Glasgow, he then proceeded to catch a train from New Jersey bound for California.

He arrived in Monterey, a seaside town one hundred miles south of San Francisco,

three weeks after leaving Britain, and remained in California until his return home, a

year and ten days after he had left. Although many of the works studied in this

chapter were published outside of this time frame, they were nearly all composed

during his stay in America, or were written later from journal notes he made at this

time. Having left without the blessing of his family, and against the advice of his

friends, Stevenson was financially dependent on his literary output. He endeavoured,

therefore, to continue publishing in Britain from America, relying on the literary

network he had already established in London.

In the first part of this chapter, I examine how Stevenson's methods and

routes to publication necessarily changed with his removal to America, considering

his reliance on recent developments in communication and transport and

investigating the publishing histories and geographies of the texts he wrote there. In

particular, I draw upon readings of *The Amateur Emigrant* (1895): the record of

Stevenson's voyage across the Atlantic on the steamship *Devonia*. Partly to save

money and partly to collect material for a book, Stevenson bought a second-class

cabin ticket, the class between steerage and saloon, bringing him into contact with

emigrants journeying to America. This travelogue spelled a marked departure from

his previous picturesque works of European travel: while declaring himself 'anxious

to see the worst of emigrant life' (*AE*, 7), the harsh realities Stevenson witnessed on

board the ship demanded a new, starker style of writing. As well as exploring the

text's depictions of the conditions endured by the passengers and Stevenson's

reflections on the nature and causes of emigration, I examine the negative responses

this new style of writing received from his literary friends and advisors, elucidating the fractious publication history of this book. I also argue that the antagonistic reactions to this text had as much to do with *where* Stevenson was writing from as *what* and *how* he writes. Saunders describes the type of literary community Stevenson operated in in London as a 'creative cluster': 'a gathering of individuals that sees in spatial proximity opportunities for information exchange, professional advancement and modish or niche lifestyles.'[77] In this context, I contend that Stevenson's close literary contacts saw his mobility, and his attempt to operate as an author outside of this spatial proximity, as threatening their conviction of how and where a 'man of letters' should act. Indeed, I suggest that national and cultural prejudices coincided with concerns about settledness, itinerancy and identity, resulting in one of Stevenson's earlier, most radical pieces of writing not being published until after his death.

In the second part of Chapter Two, I focus largely on Stevenson's writings from California, considering the often-overlooked essays 'The Old Pacific Capital' (1880) and 'A Modern Cosmopolis' (1883), as well as *The Silverado Squatters* (1884) and the second part of *The Amateur Emigrant*, 'Across the Plains' (1883). While, in comparison to the *Emigrant*, these texts retain some of the 'charm' associated with Stevenson's early writing, they also demonstrate a new attention to modernisation and globalisation: an interest in the concerns of an increasingly mobile and diverse society, which was fostered during his journey across the Atlantic. As Steven Hahn explains, the California Gold Rush of 1848 to 1855 had brought dramatic changes to region, as 'emigrants swelled the population of non-Native peoples in California, as well as the number of miners, by roughly twenty-

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[77] Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice*, p. 21.

fold within five years'.[78] Indeed, much of Stevenson's writing on the American West centres on the intense mobility of the people. Considering the recurring topics of transport and migration in each of these texts, I suggest that Stevenson anticipates the work of cultural geographers a century later by exploring the changing relationships between place, culture and identity. Aligning his writing with the work of Doreen Massey, Chapter Two argues that the Californian essays present a conception of place as fluid and open, unsettled particularly by the dynamic forces of globalisation that were shaping the world at this time. It is Stevenson's concern with the proliferating networks of transport and migration, and his exploration of how such mobility changes the nature of place that lead to the radical insights he achieves in *The Silverado Squatters*, where he questions the significance of national identity and nationhood in an increasingly globalised age.

Following his return from America, Stevenson experienced a prolonged period of intermittent but severe ill health. He was advised, the winter after he returned, to spend the season in a health retreat in Davos, Switzerland, where he remained until April 1881 before travelling there again the following winter. After April of 1882, he oscillated between various parts of Scotland and France, before moving to a chalet in the Mediterranean French town of Hyères in March 1883, where he lived for just over one year. During this time, Stevenson published a number of essays in, predominantly, the *Cornhill Magazine*, as well *New Arabian Nights* (1882) and, of course, *Treasure Island* (1883). In July 1884, he and Fanny moved to Bournemouth, living there until August 1887, during which time he experienced terrible illness that often left him unable to leave the house. He continued to write despite his deteriorating health and, indeed, published some of his

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[78] Hahn, *Nation without Borders*, p. 145.

most famous works during this time – *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*
(1886) and *Kidnapped* (1886) – as well as a number of lesser-known texts. In May
1887, Stevenson's father died and, only three months later, the author departed for
his second trip to America in search of better health, accompanied by his wife,
mother and stepson. Embarking from London on the SS *Ludgate Hill* bound for New
York, Stevenson did not expect he was leaving Britain forever. He was, however,
never to return: after spending the winter in Saranac near the Canadian border, he
and his family travelled to California, where in June 1888 they left San Francisco on
the yacht *Casco* for a cruise of the South Seas. His health improved in the Pacific
and, in January 1890, Stevenson signed the deeds for Vailima Estate in Apia, Samoa,
determining to settle permanently in the country. The author continued to write and
publish extensively from the Pacific, until his death in 1894. Indeed, he had already
secured a publication before leaving San Francisco: Samuel S. McClure, an
American specialist in press syndication, commissioned him to write fifty-two letters
of travel about his experiences in the islands. Stevenson kept a journal for this
purpose during the first voyage on the *Casco*, which took him through French
Polynesia before landing in Hawaii in January 1889, as well as during a second trip
on the trading steamer *Equator*, where he travelled through the atolls of Micronesia
from June to December 1889.[79]

Tracing Stevenson's Pacific movements, in Chapter Three I turn to the work
eventually published as *In the South Seas* (1896), a volume of the letters collected
and issued in book form after Stevenson's death. Indeed, alongside *The Amateur
Emigrant*, the letters of travel and the resultant *In the South Seas* have one of the

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[79] Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 101.

most contentious publication histories of Stevenson's *oeuvre*. It is evident in his correspondence that he quickly began to view the project as far more than exotic letters detailing his adventures in the islands. It was with an anthropological rather than autobiographical approach that Stevenson set about describing what he saw in the Pacific, providing detailed analyses of the distinct cultural practices he observed across the islands. With sections entitled 'death' and 'depopulation', the letters critique the impact of Western involvement in the area. Indeed, while in his writing from California Stevenson depicted a cosmopolitan environment, suggesting that widening networks of transport and trade could create a more united world, his letters from the Pacific reveal an awareness of the unevenness of these developments, which were creating regions 'differentiated by wealth, mobility, power, and race'.[80] I will argue that in its anthropological rather than autobiographical perspective, combined with a critique of Western colonialism, *In the South Seas* subverts the conventions of the colonial travel writing genre. Linked to his desire for objective authenticity, Stevenson removes himself from the narrative, preferring to focus on the cultural practices of the islands rather than his adventures within them. He denies his reader access to an empathetic narrator, even undermining his own observations and authority. Indeed, the authority of imperial surveillance is questioned and eventually relinquished by the text, as Stevenson and his family become as much subjects of study as the Pacific islanders. Unfortunately, it was Stevenson's narrative voice in which readers of the letters were most interested: by this time, he was the famous author of *Jekyll and Hyde* and the public expected autobiography and adventure in his letters from the South Seas. The

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[80] Hsuan L. Hsu, *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 131.

objective approach, alongside his unflinching depiction of the issues affecting

modern life in the Pacific, were not welcomed by his friends, editors or readers, and

the letters were cancelled after only thirty-four of the fifty-two McClure had

commissioned appeared in print.[81]

Nonetheless, it was not only the content of the text that caused the conflict I

describe in Chapter Three, but also the very form in which Stevenson conceived the

project. While he was commissioned to write fifty-two individual letters of travel,

Stevenson quickly began to see the material he was producing in terms of an all-

encompassing book. This expansion of the project's scope did not go unnoticed:

McClure told Stevenson of the complaint made by editors of the *New York Sun*, that

the writing they received did not 'fulfil the definition of the word "letter"'.[82] One

way in which Stevenson deviates from the traditional epistolary form is in his

rejection of a chronological narrative. Whereas in his other works mobility has been

a central concept, it is striking in *In the South Seas* how little the author describes his

own movements between the islands. He does not restrict himself to discussing one

island at a time but makes frequent cross-island comparisons, merging stories from

different parts of his travels through a thematic approach, often at the expense of a

consecutively serialised narrative. Moreover, I argue that Stevenson's rejection of

the letter form reveals a way of perceiving the Pacific that differed from the

conventional Western understanding of the region. Here, I follow anthropologist

Epeli Hau'ofa's influential line of argument, which asserts that 'there is a gulf of

difference between viewing the Pacific as "islands in a far sea" and as "a sea of

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[81] Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1994), p. 329
[82] S. S. McClure to Stevenson, quoted in Peter Lyon, *Success Story: The Life and Times of S. S. McClure* (New York: Scribner's, 1963), p. 106.

islands"'.[83] He argues it was 'Europeans, on entering the Pacific after crossing huge expanses of ocean, who introduced the view of "islands in a far sea". From this perspective the islands are tiny, isolated dots in a vast ocean.'[84] Through his comparative methodology, which privileges a thematic structure over a chronological narrative, Stevenson reveals a holistic view of the Pacific, presenting it as a sea of interconnected islands, rather than individual, isolated 'islands in a far sea'. As I will demonstrate, it was his determination to explore the islands in the totality of their relationships that resulted in him so quickly discarding the idea of letters, his conception of the project shifting in line with his conception of the Pacific.

Chapter Four looks at *The Wrecker* (1892), Stevenson's first novel from the Pacific and the only piece of fiction studied in this thesis. This novel, however, is as much a reflection of Stevenson's extensive experiences of travel as any of his travel writing. The highly mobile narrative moves between three continents and clearly draws on his experiences of bohemian Paris, his journey across America and time spent in San Francisco, as well as his ocean voyages and island landfalls in the Pacific. Indeed, while many of the texts examined in this study explore the conditions and effects of globalisation, and in their production histories demonstrate Stevenson's own recourse to the expanding global networks of transport and communication, it is *The Wrecker* that most clearly articulates his growing understanding of the world as a single, unified system. In its composition, its production and its narrative, the novel is characterised by global networks and mobility, specifically the rapidly developing mobility of the late Victorian age. Co-

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[83] Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, ed. by Vijay Naidu, Eric Waddell and Epeli Hau'ofa (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1993), pp. 2–17 (p. 7).
[84] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', p. 7.

authored with Stevenson's stepson Lloyd Osbourne, the story was conceived on a ship and started during a visit to Abemama in Kiribati, while the family were still travellers and before their decision to settle in the Pacific. *The Wrecker* was originally serialised in *Scribner's Magazine*, with Stevenson posting longer sections to the editor to be divided and published in twelve monthly instalments. The authors, as well as the manuscripts, were extremely mobile: just as sections of the novel were separated by continents during the production process, so at times were Stevenson and Osbourne. In the first part of this chapter, I examine the intense mobility that attended the composition and production of *The Wrecker*. Alongside this mobility, I consider the issues of literary production that are explored in the narrative, preoccupations which are far more prominent in this novel than considerations of the changing environment of the Pacific islands. The central action of the narrative is based on the risks and opportunities presented by global networks of transport and communication. Indeed, I argue that the intense mobility and fragmentation involved in the text's production process is mirrored in *The Wrecker* itself – particularly, its mobile narrative and its focus on transport, speed and issues of literary production – reflecting the concerns of an itinerant nineteenth-century author publishing his first novel from the Pacific.

In the second section of the chapter, I interrogate the specific nature of mobility as proposed in the novel, considering the ideologies implicated in the mobile practices that occupy such a central role in the narrative. In the epilogue dedicated to his friend Will Low, Stevenson describes the work as 'full of the unrest and movement of our century, so that the reader is hurried from place to place and sea to sea' (*Wrecker*, 404). I consider the meanings behind the consistent focus on vehicles and transport, alongside the link between mobility and capitalism, and the

depiction of both the opportunities and dangers of enhanced mobility at the close of the nineteenth century. Despite its emphasis on mobility, however, and unlike *In the South Seas*, *The Wrecker* questions neither the unequal access to innovations in transport nor the impact of this enhanced mobility on the Pacific islands and their inhabitants. Indeed, unlike much of his other writing from the Pacific, *The Wrecker* does not offer a critique of Western involvement in the region: it does not even provide detailed insights into Pacific culture. It is *movement* and not *places* that preoccupy this novel, as it demonstrates the significance of speed to the changing global culture of the *fin de siècle*. Indeed, considering the lack of interest in the Pacific environment alongside its concentration on transport, mobility and speed, I argue that *time* is more significant than *place* in *The Wrecker*. Whereas Stevenson termed 'The Beach of Falesá' 'sixteen pages of the South Seas: their essence' (*Letters*, VII, 155), he does not value *The Wrecker* by its portrayal of a specific place or region. Its significance, instead, is in its portrayal of the age, its depiction of 'the unrest and movement of our century' (*Wrecker*, 404). Through his focus on speed and the rationalisation of time following internationally accepted time zones, as well as in the episodic, fragmented structure of the novel itself, Stevenson depicts the time–space compression of the late nineteenth century, precipitated by developments in mobility. It is not the Pacific that inspires or is revealed in *The Wrecker*, but modernity itself – the dynamic forces shaping the late nineteenth century epitomised in the narrative, structure and production history of Stevenson's most mobile novel.

As Andrew Thacker asserts, 'all texts are written, published and read somewhere – and it is these many "somewheres" that now require further attention':

> Writers live, leave or travel through specific places that mark their perception of the world and many texts represent quite directly places, spaces, cities, nations and islands; thinking through the nature of the impact of these environments upon texts, in ways that can be added to existing social and

historical modes of interpretation is clearly one way forward for a critical
literary geography.[85]

In this thesis, my aim is to contribute new interpretations of Stevenson's work by

paying particular attention to the environments in which they were conceived,

written and produced, by examining how they travelled and the spaces through

which they moved. Each of the chapters demonstrates a way of thinking about the

production of texts and their literary content as intimately linked rather than

disparate aspects of a work, but both equally reflective of and generated by the

environment through which their author lives and moves. In his own life, Stevenson

embodied many of the modern values of the nineteenth century that shaped the

globalised societies in which we live today: a pervasive desire for mobility, a belief

in dynamic progress and in seizing the opportunities offered by advances in

technology. Yet, in both their histories and their content, Stevenson's texts also

provide an insight into the implications of such progress and how these too have

shaped our world: they show the fear of change, the suspicion and prejudice towards

certain types of mobility, the uneven access to developments that entrenches

inequalities and creates groups of the 'mobility poor'.[86] Nevertheless, despite the

challenges he faced and problems he encountered, Stevenson's thirst for travel, for

new cultural experiences and for sharing these in his writing could not be quenched.

In his life and his works, he above all represents hope for an increasingly mobile

global society: hope that the growing movement of people will inspire new ideas and

generate new friendships; that it will drive innovations and the spread of knowledge;

and, ultimately, that it will lead to greater mutual understanding and awareness of the

world that we share.

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[85] Thacker, 'Literary Geography', p. 73.
[86] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 265.

Chapter One

Cockfield to the Cévennes

> I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move; to feel the needs and hitches of our life more nearly; to come down off this feather-bed of civilisation, and find the globe granite underfoot and strewn with cutting flints. (*TDC*, 35)

In the summer of 1873 Robert Louis Stevenson paid what he would later describe as a 'very fortunate visit' to a cousin in Suffolk.[1] It was here, at Cockfield Rectory in Suffolk, that he first met the Cambridge Professor of Fine Art and 'man of letters' Sidney Colvin, an encounter that would shape the course of his career for years to come. As Stevenson himself attests, he was by this time 'firmly decided upon the career of letters' (*Memoirs*, 164); yet the opportunities for paid writing were slim. His forays into literature thus far had been brief: his first appearance in print had been secured at the expense of his father, who in 1866 paid for the production of *The Pentland Rising*, a short pamphlet of Covenanting history. In 1869 Stevenson joined Edinburgh University's Speculative Society, a literary and debating club comprised of promising young intellectuals, three of whom Stevenson assisted in the editing of a new periodical, the *Edinburgh University Magazine*. Running to only four issues, the magazine nevertheless represented a significant venture for Stevenson: it was, as Claire Harman suggests, his 'first real opportunity to associate with other would-be writers',[2] and to be recognised as a writer himself. Despite the galvanising effects of this venture, by the time he met Colvin in 1873 Stevenson was yet to be paid for a

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[1] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memoirs of Himself* (London: William Heinemann, 1924), p. 164. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.
[2] Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 65.

piece of writing. He despaired at the likelihood of ever earning a living through

literature, exclaiming once to his friend Charles Baxter: 'Good God, will anyone ever

publish me!'[3]

It is the period from this point in July 1873, when Stevenson first fatefully

journeyed south to Cockfield, up until 1879, just before his departure for America,

which forms the focus of this chapter. During these six years, Stevenson developed

from an engineering student longing to write to an author of three books, over a dozen

essays, four short stories, and a serialised fantasy. As J. C. Furnas points out, 'the

actual production of printed words was hardly six months' work for a competent

hack'.[4] For Stevenson, however, these early years were spent not just writing but

acclimatising to the business of professional authorship, establishing himself as a

contributor to the leading periodicals of the day through his developing literary

networks. It was also a time of extensive geographical movement for the emerging

author: as well as regular journeys from his family home in Edinburgh to the literary

metropolis of London, Stevenson made twelve separate trips to France during these

six years. Beginning with his extended stay in Menton (the convalescent capital of

the Riviera), where he was sent on doctor's orders in November 1873, Stevenson

returned to France time and time again, often joining his cousin Bob in an artists'

colony in Barbizon in the north of France. Turning these trips to his professional

advantage he wrote essays about the regions he visited, such as 'Forest Notes' (1876),

as well as the two books of egocentric travel, *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels

with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879) (see Figure 2). Furnas describes

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[3] Charles Baxter in a letter to Lord Guthrie, 25 March 1914 (MS Edinburgh), quoted in *Letters*, I, 41, n. 3.

[4] J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), pp. 104–05.

France as 'the scene of [Stevenson's] personal and professional emancipation';[5] as well as consolidating his early literary career in the country, the young author also met his wife-to-be Fanny Osbourne in the Fontainebleau region. Yet, as much as Stevenson enjoyed the bohemian lifestyle he found in France, it was not the qualities of the country that kept him so often on the move as much as the act of travel itself. He revelled in the role of the nomad, instructing his mother in 1874 not to 'be vexed at [his] absences' but to 'take [his] nomadic habits as part of [him]', before exclaiming: 'I *must* be a vagabond!' (*Letters*, II, 60)
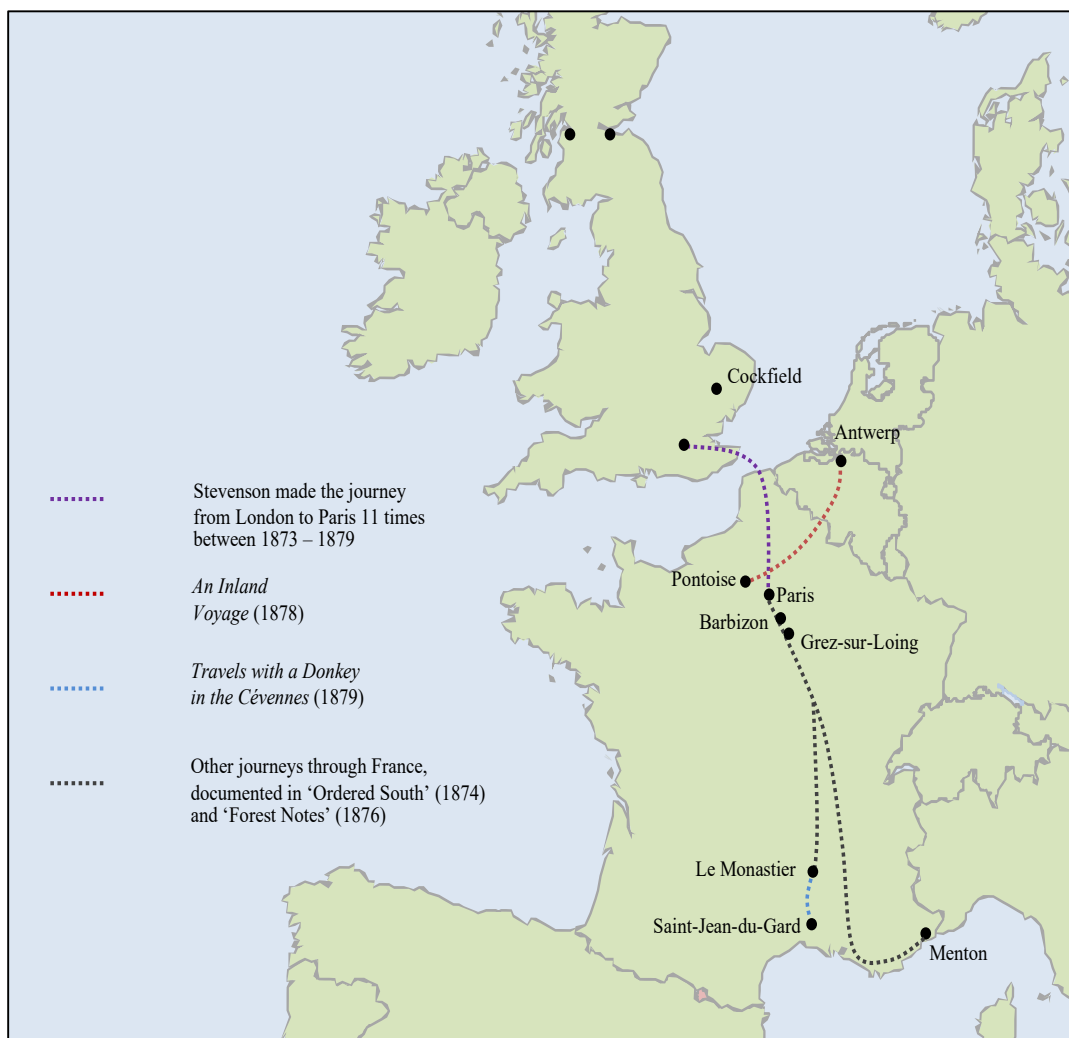
Figure 2. Map illustrating Stevenson's movements between Britain and mainland Europe 1873–79.

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[5] Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 115.

It is the foundational significance of travel in the development of Stevenson's early literary career that the first section of this chapter will explore. I demonstrate how Stevenson's geographic mobility facilitated his first paid publications, considering the journey to Cockfield where he met Colvin, as well as his medically-ordered stay in Menton. Yet I will also suggest that the reverse is true, arguing that the motivation to produce literary texts also engendered travel, elucidating the intertwined and reciprocal relationship between geographical movement and the development of Stevenson's early career. The journeys documented in both *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey* were, as Stevenson himself declared, made specifically with the resulting texts in mind.[6] The first section examines his first book, *An Inland Voyage*, in particular: here, not only is Stevenson's movement the driving force of the narrative, in line with the travel writing genre, but mobility forms a central conceptual focus. Most critical interpretations of the book have explored its treatment of social class and Stevenson's attempt to escape the ties of his own background through movement;[7] or they have considered how travel allows him to reconstruct his identity, reading the text as an 'inward voyage' into the author's self.[8] While I will contribute to these discussions in the second section of

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[6] Before embarking on the canoe tour that became *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson informed Frances Sitwell that 'it should make a jolly book of gossip' (*Letters*, II, 178). In the journal he kept during his hike through the Cévennes, Stevenson added an additional sentence not included in the published book: 'I travel for travel's sake. And to write about it afterwards, if only the public will be so condescending as to read'. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Cévennes Journal: Notes on a Journey through the French Highlands*, ed. by Gordon Golding (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1979), p. 54.

[7] Jason A. Pierce, '"The Damned Thing in Boards and a Ticket on Its Behind": Stevenson's First Book, *An Inland Voyage*', in *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by William B. Jones (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2003), pp. 127–39 (p. 134); Oliver, S. Buckton, 'Reanimating Stevenson's Corpus', in *Stevenson Reconsidered*, ed. by William B. Jones, pp. 37–67 (p. 45).

[8] Sue Zlosnik, '"Home is the sailor, home from sea": Robert Louis Stevenson and the End of Wandering', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 34 (2004), 240–52 (p. 243); Alex Clunas, '"Out of My Country and Myself I Go": Identity and Writing in Stevenson's Early Travel Books', *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, 23.1 (1996), 54–73 (p. 66); Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', in *EC*, ed. by Fielding, pp. 86–101 (p. 92–94).

this chapter, I intend first to explore geographic mobility as a key preoccupation of *An Inland Voyage* – something which has thus far been overlooked or subordinated to these other aspects of the text. Rather than restricting his focus to his own mobility, and how 'the self' shifts as it moves through the landscape, Stevenson repeatedly selects mobile people (bargees, pedlars, travelling artists) as objects of interest and analysis. It is a topic that occurs so frequently and in different contexts throughout this short book that I believe it deserves analysis in its own right. Indeed, in later chapters, we will see how global mobility forms a fundamental concern in Stevenson's writing, as he witnesses how developments in high-speed transport are changing the world, while simultaneously using them for his own travel and publishing purposes. In his first book, however, he focuses on slow, local mobility, considering the nature of a mobile life and society's attitudes towards people who choose movement over settledness.

This section also considers Colvin's influential role in the establishment of Stevenson's first literary network. As Penny Fielding explains, 'Stevenson's writing career intersects with rapid changes in the cultural idea of what an author was, how literature should be judged, and who was qualified to do the judging'.[9] In 1873, Stevenson was entering a world of literary coteries and dining clubs – an arena dominated by the cultivated figure of the 'man of letters'. Drawing on his correspondence, I will explore how Stevenson, with the guidance of Colvin, positioned himself within this environment at the beginning of his career, focusing on the period that culminated in his election to the Savile Club in June 1874. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the 'field of cultural production', I argue that Colvin invested in Stevenson the 'symbolic capital' he had acquired as an

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[9] Penny Fielding (ed.), 'Introduction', in *EC*, pp. 1–10 (p. 2).

established man of letters, thereby adding value to the young author's work and

facilitating his integration into the intellectual and literary circles of London.[10]

The second section of this chapter examines Stevenson's perception of his

authorship in these first stages of his career, arguing that without the authority to

consecrate or bring value to his own work he lacks confidence in his place in the

profession. It is not simply uncertainty about his writing ability that he reveals in

correspondence from this period: a recurrent theme is the volatility of his personality

and identity, each dependent upon and susceptible to the influences of people and

place. Indeed, the concept of unstable identity that Stevenson presents in his letters –

identity which is reconstituted through movement between places – is also a central

concern running through his first book, *An Inland Voyage*. Caroline McCracken-

Flesher argues that Stevenson's distinct contribution to travel writing was to make

the genre 'a site of exchange between place, persons and perceiver', suggesting that

this focus on the changing self is a key feature running through many of his texts.[11]

Particularly at this uncertain and unpredictable point of his career, however, this

concern is at its most prominent, evident in both his correspondence and his literary

works. In *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson's authorial presence is self-conscious: the

narrator regularly shifts between grammatical persons (at times ostensibly

Stevenson, at others not). His nationality and his class identity are equally

inconsistent, while such distinctions are themselves revealed to be vulnerable and

impermanent, particularly when not secured or rooted in 'place'. The figure of the

unstable author will be the analytical focus for the remainder of this section, as I

consider Stevenson's contradictory conceptions of authorship in his letters. At times

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[10] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal
Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 77.
[11] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', in *EC*, ed. by Fielding, pp. 86–101 (p. 101).

assuming the romantic role of an author awaiting inspiration, while at others

asserting the absolute exigency of earning money through writing, Stevenson's

ambivalence reflects the tensions between the expected image of the 'man of letters'

and the economic realities of professional authorship at this time.

The third section in this chapter will focus on the years leading up to

Stevenson's departure for America in 1879, as he gradually became more established

in the literary environment of London. Considering the first and last book Stevenson

published during this period, *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*, I explore

the differences between them in order to trace his development as an author. David

Daiches notes that 'in *Travels with a Donkey* (1879) the writing is freer and more

flexible'; 'the latter book is less coy and more self-confident than the former'.[12] I

will consider the evolution of Stevenson's literary style alongside his place in the

literary industry, again taking Bourdieu's field of cultural capital as a model for his

establishment in London's literary world. While still assisted by Colvin in many

instances, and with commercial success as an author far from guaranteed, Stevenson

began to show glimmers of self-assurance and independence. Meeting William

Ernest Henley in 1875 enabled him to adopt a new role within his growing literary

network: no longer just the grateful recipient of introductions and recommendations,

he was now able to use his own gradually increasing symbolic capital to bring his

new friend to the attention of appropriate publishers and editors. *Travels with a*

Donkey in the Cévennes (1879) attested to Stevenson's growing confidence as a

writer: although he continued to experiment with different personae, he appears

more assured in his authorial role, asserting it at various points in the text. Yet

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[12] David Daiches, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Revaluation* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1947), p. 153.

despite his growing confidence and understanding of the market, Stevenson was not

entirely comfortable in the literary milieu of London. Later, in 'A Foreigner at

Home' (1882), he attested to the cultural differences between the English and the

Scottish, revealing that he felt out of place among a community of Englishmen and

in the foreign environment of the Savile Club. With his early career so defined by

travel and movement, particularly movement *away* from his home in Scotland,

Edinburgh was not the site Stevenson associated with professional growth or

success; neither, however, did he feel he belonged in London. His authorial identity

is, then, more aligned to the state of itinerancy than to any specific city or country,

the significance of geographical movement in the formation of his early literary

identity preparing Stevenson for his future peripatetic career.

The Making of an Author: Travel, Sidney Colvin and Stevenson's Early Literary Career

> Do I not remember the time when I myself haunted the station, to watch train
> after train carry its complement of freemen into the night, and read the names
> of distant places on the time-bills with indescribable longings? (*IV*, 21)

These words from *An Inland Voyage* reveal the innate desire for mobility that

Stevenson seemed to possess. Here, as young man in Edinburgh, it is not the

attractions of a different city or country that captivated his imagination; it is simply

the lure of 'elsewhere', the pull of 'distant places', the thrill of travel. Indeed, even in

its earliest stages, travel proved to be a formative factor in Stevenson's literary

career: it was a journey south, from Edinburgh to Suffolk, that facilitated his first

move into paid authorship. The introduction to Sidney Colvin represented a turning

point in Stevenson's life; he now had support from within the literary circle of

London, with an established critic willing to put his contacts and experience at the

young author's disposal. Stevenson was already familiar with Colvin through the latter's critical writing in the *Fortnightly Review* and was unsurprisingly a little in awe of him. Reflecting on the meeting years later, Stevenson writes: 'that I should there meet with the flesh-and-blood Colvin of the *Fortnightly Review*, was a thing beyond the bound of my extremest hopes.' Arriving at Cockfield at the bequest of Frances Sitwell specifically in order to meet this 'youthful genius', Colvin was 'prepared to notice [him] with favour'. As Stevenson writes, 'these preparations go a long way in life': with Colvin 'the ready patron' and himself 'the ready worshipper' (Memoirs, 164), the dynamic was preconditioned for easy friendship. For his part, Colvin claims to have immediately recognised 'that here, among [his] juniors, was a genius who might well fail on the threshold of life, but who, if he could only win through, had it in him to take as shining a place as any of them.'[13]

It was here at Cockfield Rectory, encouraged by the enthusiasm and advice of his new friends, that Stevenson formulated the idea for 'Roads' (1873), his first paid contribution to a publication, secured through Colvin's literary connections. Conceived while on holiday in Suffolk but written largely at his home in Edinburgh, the essay is another example of the significance of travel for Stevenson at the beginning of his career: as Jennifer Hayward asserts, 'Roads' 'is a meditation on the lure of the horizon and its effect on the traveller.'[14] With the essay's conception and publication facilitated by the journey south, geographical movement (in particular movement *away* from home) acquires a more than usual significance at this critical point in Stevenson's career. In the following year, this association between travel and literary achievement was only reinforced: even before 'Roads' had been

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[13] Sidney Colvin, *Memories and Notes of Persons and Places, 1852–1912* (New York: Scribner's, 1921), p. 106.
[14] Jennifer Hayward, '"The Foreigner at Home": The Travel Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson', *JSS*, 9 (2012), 233–70 (p. 237).

published Stevenson's poor health required him to take up residence in the south of

France, in the popular convalescent town of Menton. Arriving in November 1873, he

remained in the region for five months and was joined for much of that time by

Colvin, who was still determined to help Stevenson reach his potential. Capitalising

again on a change in location to stimulate his literary productions, this extended visit

became the subject of Stevenson's second paid publication, 'Ordered South' (1874).

Whilst providing inspiration for the essay, however, this time abroad also

resulted in Stevenson missing a major milestone in his literary career. Dependent

upon the international postage system, it was not until Stevenson departed Menton

for Paris that he saw 'Roads' in print – four months after it was published. The

magazine was 'too bulky for the post' (*Letters*, I, 411) and appeared unable to reach

the south of France. Stevenson felt this deprivation bitterly, referencing it repeatedly

in his letters from Menton, before writing to Colvin upon his arrival in Paris: 'for

God's sake, send a *Portfolio*. I shall end by hating you about this: I *do* want to see

"Roads". It is the middle of April now; and we are "strangers yet"' (I, 503). At this

early age, Stevenson experienced a phenomenon that would become commonplace

over the next twenty years: he was abroad at the point of publication, outside of the

area of circulation where his writing was being consumed. Whilst this physical

separation from his literary productions would become routine, the fact that it

occurred at this initial, pivotal point in his career appears significant. At the moment

when he can first consider himself a 'professional' author, he is outside of the market

in which his writing appears, this first displacement perhaps paving the way for the

many others that he would experience during his peripatetic career.

Whether bringing him into contact with influential literary figures or

providing the stimulus for his literary works, travel was a formative factor in

Stevenson's early career. Yet just as travel facilitated literature, so the desire to produce literature also motivated travel. The journeys recorded in his first two works of travel, *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*, were undertaken with the clear objective of generating the texts. Before embarking on the canoe tour that became *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson informed Sitwell that 'it should make a jolly book of gossip' (*Letters*, II, 178). After returning from the trip, he told his mother that he might not 'have stuck to it […] if it had not been for professional purposes; for an easy book may be written and sold, with mighty little brains about it, where the journey is of a certain seriousness and can be named' (II, 189). Stephen Arata argues that, in *An Inland Voyage*, this calculated relation between the trip and the production of the book is concealed, suggesting that the narrator's proclaimed desire to 'get to work' near the end of the text 'is the sole acknowledgment within the book of the labor that went to produce it'.[15] This is not quite true: in the opening few pages, the narrator states that steering a canoe under sail is 'almost as trying a venture into the regions of the unknown as to publish a first book' (*IV*, 3). Here, albeit subtly, Stevenson links the effort of the journey with the labour of producing the text, hinting at the relation between the two. Arata is correct, however, in his observation that the professional motivations behind the expeditions are rarely overtly acknowledged in the texts. Although in *Travels with a Donkey*, Stevenson does reveal his intention of turning the journey into a book, he also claims to 'travel for travel's sake' (*TDC*, 35). Reminiscent of *l'art pour l'art*, this image of an excursion taken with no interest in its commercial potential is the one he chooses to project in the published text. Yet in the journal he kept during the trip, Stevenson

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[15] Stephen Arata, 'Stevenson, Morris, and the Value of Idleness', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, eds. Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 3–12 (p. 11).

included an additional sentence: 'I travel for travel's sake. And to write about it afterwards, if only the public will be so condescending as to read', this deleted afterthought adding a decidedly mercenary quality to his ostensibly aesthetic expedition.[16]

Considering the significance of travel throughout Stevenson's career, it is unsurprising that it formed the basis of his first published book. *An Inland Voyage* is a short travelogue produced from a canoe trip Stevenson took through Belgium and France in the summer of 1876. Although not prepared in publishable form until winter 1877, 'pages and pages of it are [from Stevenson's] original journal, written in inns, with hardly a word changed' (*Letters*, II, 231). Like all of the author's travel writing, this book is not widely read and, in comparison to his more well-known fictional works, has received relatively little critical attention. Jason A. Pierce, however, places the book in its contemporary literary context, explaining that while 'Victorian travel narratives were typically published by the same general-interest publishers that produced […] novels', they 'were judged less on the quality of their characterization and, like the guidebooks of the day, more on the information they conveyed.'[17] By the time Stevenson published *An Inland Voyage* there were already three travel narratives in print describing a similar journey. Thomas Rolls Warrington and George Smyth Baden Powell published an account of their canoe journey in the *Cornhill* (October–November 1870), titled 'The Log of the "Nautilus" and "Isis" Canoes'. As Pierce explains, 'there is little indication that the places Warrington and Baden Powell visit are inhabited; rather, they are a series of interesting sites'.[18] Similar was James Lynam Molloy's 1876 book *Our Autumn*

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[16] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Cévennes Journal: Notes on a Journey through the French Highlands*, ed. by Gordon Golding (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1979), p. 54.
[17] Pierce, 'Stevenson's First Book', p. 128.
[18] Pierce, 'Stevenson's First Book', p. 129.

Holiday on French Rivers, which described the journey of four public school and

university graduates on board an outrigger canoe, travelling between French

landmarks. Finally, published shortly before Stevenson undertook his own canoe

trip, is William Moëns's *Through France and Belgium, by River and Canal, in the

Stream Yacht 'Ytene'* (1876), which Stevenson references in *An Inland Voyage* (p.

47). Again Pierce argues that 'it is the sites that receive particular attention' in this

book.[19] He explains that, unlike novels or guidebooks, 'travel narratives tended to be

the products of "amateurs", giving their prose 'a certain measure of innocence,

which was generally accepted to readers who expected superfluity of detail rather

than writing skill'.[20]

While he may have been covering similar ground geographically, Stevenson

departed from this literary model in *An Inland Voyage*. The book contains no

descriptions of famous sites or landmarks, and it is the 'writing skill' that is

undoubtedly privileged over rich detail. Indeed, it is often acknowledged that the

book contains more style than substance: David Daiches points to the 'deliberate

display of craftmanship', suggesting 'one has the feeling here that literature does not

exist in order to illuminate life, but life exists in order to provide an excuse for

literature.'[21] Arata suggests there is very little content in the text at all, terming it 'an

odd book':

> It does almost none of the things travel books do. It is not a voyage of
> discovery in any conventional sense. Stevenson takes, literally, only passing
> interest in the topography he traverses, the communities he encounters, the
> people he meets.[22]

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[19] Pierce, 'Stevenson's First Book', p. 130.
[20] Pierce, 'Stevenson's First Book', p. 128.
[21] Daiches, Stevenson: A Revaluation, p. 148–49.
[22] Arata, 'Stevenson, Morris, and the Value of Idleness', p. 4.

Yet while it is accurate to say that Stevenson does not offer any extensive or sustained analysis of the individuals he meets, there is an abstract community, defined by their lifestyle, that does dominate the pages of the text. Mobile people, or those desiring this lifestyle, recur repeatedly in the relatively short book, and along with them an analysis of life defined by movement rather than stasis.

An Inland Voyage, then, is not only a travel book in the sense that it documents a journey: it also takes the idea of mobility as a key focus. A community that Stevenson repeatedly explores in the book is that of 'the bargee'. At the opening of the text he proclaims the 'canal barge […] delightful to consider', 'for such a life is both to travel and to stay at home' (p. 8). Here, the author perhaps reveals his own ambivalence towards 'home', which I will explore in more detail later in this chapter. Indeed, barges do occupy a liminal position, providing some comforts of a settled life while offering the potential of a mobile existence. Yet it is the mobility, rather than the settledness that captivates Stevenson in the end. He begins by imagining 'the barge float[ing] by great forests and through great cities', with 'the bargee, in his floating home' (p. 8); yet when he next considers 'these little cities by the canal' it is to marvel that 'if only the canal below were to open, one junk after another would hoist sail or harness horses and swim away into all parts of France; and the impromptu hamlet would separate, house by house, to the four winds' (pp. 44–45). It is less the draw of 'a floating home' and more the potential for immediate removal from any settled community that Stevenson finds keeps 'simmering in [his] mind', setting him 'wishing to go aboard' (p. 45).

In *An Inland Voyage*, life on board a barge is used to represent a mobile existence free from responsibility, which Stevenson contrasts with a life of stasis, characterized by work in an 'office'. He declares:

> I am sure I would rather be a bargee than occupy any position under Heaven that required attendance at an office. There are few callings, I should say, where a man gives up less of his liberty in return for regular meals. (p. 8)

There are, throughout the text, repeated references to 'offices' and commercial professions, which are invariably contrasted with a nomadic lifestyle. Reflecting on the common mistrust of mobile peoples, Stevenson conversely asserts that 'any stroller must be dear to the right-thinking heart; if it were only as a living protest against offices and the mercantile spirit' (p. 103). In his analysis of the text, Pierce focuses on the author's treatment of class, suggesting that 'Stevenson concluded that the life of the working class was not necessarily undesirable, even though this conclusion was at odds with Victorian middle-class morality, which asserted the preeminent value of wealth and domestic stability'. He argues that, for Stevenson, 'the life of the peasantry could be preferable to the life of those whom he derisively called "bankers"', highlighting this passage as evidence: 'It is better fun, during the holidays, to be the son of a travelling merchant, than the son and heir to the greatest cotton spinner in creation' (p. 32).[23] Yet, while class is certainly a factor in the dichotomy Stevenson presents, it is again a life defined by mobility that he idealises here. It is a particular kind of 'peasantry' for which he declares preference: not one tied to place or community, working the land or in a factory, but a life on the road.

Indeed, the principal opposition explored in the text is that between mobility and 'the mercantile spirit'. In 1874, Stevenson declared to his mother: 'I *must* be a vagabond!' (*Letters*, II, 60), and it is very much a 'vagabonding' mobility he extols in this book. While considering at length the life of a bargee, he does not once mention the labour involved, and even his declaration on behalf of the 'travelling merchant' is at one remove from the economics involved: it is not the merchant he

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[23] Pierce, 'Stevenson's First Book', p. 135.

imagines being, but his son. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters,

Stevenson's later writing becomes increasingly concerned with the link between

mobility and globalisation, with how developments in high-speed transport facilitate

and support a global economy. In *An Inland Voyage*, however, before he has

travelled with economic migrants through America, witnessed the cosmopolitanism

of San Francisco or the busy trade routes of the Pacific, Stevenson declares it 'an

evil age for the gypsily inclined among men. He who can sit squarest on a three-

legged stool, he it is who has the wealth and glory' (p. 20). Here, it is the act of

'strolling', without economic purpose, that occupies his imagination, as he writes:

'There is some life in humanity yet; and youth will now and again find a brave word

to say in dispraise of riches, and throw up a situation to go strolling with a knapsack'

(p. 103). Indeed, one of the text's most emphatic appeals for the nomadic life is

directed at a man who, on the surface of it, has a mobile profession. Yet 'the driver

of the hotel omnibus' in Maubeuge is described as a 'cage-bird' with 'haggard eyes'

(pp. 20–21):

> How he longed to travel! he told me. How he longed to be somewhere else,
> and see the round world before he went to the grave! 'Here I am,' said he. 'I
> drive to the station. Well. And then I drive back again to the hotel. And so on
> every day all the week round. My God, is that life?' I could not say I thought
> it was […] (pp. 19–20)

Such contained, regulated mobility, which earns a steady salary and returns the

driver to a fixed place after every journey, is not the romantic, nomadic existence

venerated in this book: 'Better a thousand times he should be a tramp, and mend pots

and pans by the wayside, and sleep under trees, and see the dawn and sunset every

day above a new horizon' (p. 20).

Yet it is exactly this type of random, deregulated mobility that is often

mistrusted by society. As Tim Cresswell explains, '[p]lace, home and roots are

profoundly moral concepts in the humanist lexicon', contributing to the 'widespread associations of mobility with deviance, shiftlessness and disrepute'. In opposition to place and home, then, mobility appears to involve *absences*: an absence of commitment, attachment and involvement.[24] Travelling through France and Belgium by canoe or on foot, Stevenson and his partner encountered much of this prejudice towards perennially mobile people. McCracken-Flesher notes that, 'within the landscape, often wet, muddy and hungry, Stevenson and Walter Simpson could only be read negatively by the locals'.[25] In *An Inland Voyage*, they are repeatedly mistaken for 'pedlars' (p. 27), and are turned away from inns so often they 'began to think [they] might be pedlars, after all' (p. 28). Such experiences prompt Stevenson to reflect on the suspicion with which travellers are often treated: 'Local authorities look with such an evil eye upon the strolling artist. Alas! I know it well, who have been myself taken for one, and pitilessly incarcerated on the strength of the misapprehension' (p. 107). Describing this occasion, Stevenson remembers his treatment by the wife of a French commissary, in particular 'with what a hard and scornful eye she measured the vagabond before her!' (p. 123). By once again terming himself a 'vagabond', Stevenson aligns himself with one of the earliest figures of 'threatening' mobility. In early modern Europe, the 'free-roaming vagabonds' were seen as 'anarchic mirror images of order'.[26] Zygmunt Bauman explains that 'what made the vagabond so terrifying was his apparent freedom to move and so to escape the net of the previously locally based control. Worse than that, the movements of the vagabond were unpredictable; unlike the pilgrim […], the

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[24] Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 15.
[25] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 93.
[26] Cresswell, *The Tramp*, p. 17.

vagabond has no set destination.'[27]

The unpredictable mobility of the vagabond threatened to disturb the order of a settled existence. Stevenson recognises this antagonism continuing in the nineteenth century, declaring: 'It is all very fine to talk about tramps and morality. Six hours of police surveillance (such as I have had) or one brutal rejection from an inn-door change your views upon the subject like a course of lectures' (*IV*, 74). In the next chapter, I will argue that Stevenson truly finds himself the subject of prejudice owing to his itinerancy when he travels out of Europe for the first time, as opposed to these instances of mistaken identity. During his first, unpredictable and indefinite journey to America, I suggest that his friends' negative responses to the writing he produced were entwined with their unease at his mobility, for his behaviour disturbed their notions of how and where a 'man of letters' should exist. In Stevenson's early writing, however, the role of the wanderer is more cultivated and deliberate, affording him the distance to reflect critically on people's reactions to his itinerant status. Indeed, his interest in this topic persists until the end of the period considered in this chapter. In *Travels with a Donkey*, published shortly before his departure for America, he is again mistaken for a pedlar, and again reflects on the hostile opposition between a 'sedentary' and mobile life: 'At the end of a fagging day, the sharp, cruel note of a dog's bark is in itself a keen annoyance; and to a tramp like myself, he represents the sedentary and respectful world in its most hostile form' (*TDC*, p. 82).

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[27] Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 94.

While travel played a fundamental role in many ways during this period, and indeed throughout Stevenson's life, it was the first journey south to Cockfield that had the most immediate and dramatic impact on his career. His relationship with Sidney Colvin, initiated at the rectory in Suffolk and consolidated during their time together in Menton, brought Stevenson into contact with influential figures of the London literary establishment. The first of these referenced in Stevenson's correspondence is Alexander Macmillan of *Macmillan's Magazine*. Colvin had evidently mentioned his connections with this publication during the Cockfield visit, as barely a month later Stevenson wrote to him concerning 'Roads': 'I am afraid to send anything I can turn out to Macmillan. I know so well that it will be feeble and uninteresting; and yet I do not know if it would be quite fair to ask you to look over it first' (*Letters*, I, 308). Initially unsure of the role Colvin was to play in his literary career, Stevenson seemed to be testing the waters before asking for feedback on this first piece of writing. He need not have worried: Colvin replied with six pages of advice and emendations, following which Stevenson resolved to 'buckle to, […] remodel[ling] "Roads" according to S.C.'s prescriptions' (I, 311).

In this early exchange between the young author and Colvin we can see the foundations being laid for the dynamics of their lifelong social and professional relationship. Upon sending him the first draft of 'Roads', Stevenson assures Colvin that he 'can stand honesty', continuing: 'And indeed, I should be more proud of your honest refusal (as a proof that you know I can take the truth in good part, which I can, by God) than of any half-hearted acceptance' (I, 308–09). Stevenson reiterates this point at end of the letter, reassuring Colvin that he should 'believe the passage about telling [him] the truth; it may be convenient some time' (I, 310). It is clear from the six pages of revisions he made to 'Roads' that Colvin accepted these

assurances immediately. Moreover, after this initial instance, such exchanges became a regular feature of their relationship: throughout Stevenson's career Colvin suggested emendations to his literary works, expressing his opinion frankly if he thought anything below the author's usual standard. Several years into their friendship, Stevenson himself acknowledges this dynamic: '[Colvin] always had the air of a man accustomed to obedience; […] I have pretty generally obeyed him myself, and I am not subordinate by nature' (*Memoirs*, 165). The exchanges between the two men at this early point in their acquaintance paved the way for their future relationship; in many ways, Stevenson never completely lost the feeling of awe he describes in first meeting 'the flesh-and-blood Colvin of the *Fortnightly Review*' (p. 164). In their correspondence, Stevenson consistently addressed him as 'my dear Colvin', writing with an air of respect that was markedly different to the playful, rakish tone in his letters to peers like Baxter or Henley. Stevenson revered Colvin at this early stage and, to a certain extent, this veneration continued throughout his life. While at times he would describe him as 'a difficult, shut up, noble fellow', with whom 'little relation in the human sense is possible', to Stevenson Colvin largely remained 'a person in whom you must *believe*, like a person of the Trinity' (*Letters*, II, 317).

Stevenson's association with Colvin was not the only significant relationship that influenced this early period in the author's career. As I have already argued, the five months he spent in Menton, during which he missed the publication of 'Roads' and wrote 'Ordered South', were significant in the formation of his identity as a peripatetic writer. Steven Donovan argues that this first solo trip abroad 'has a liminal significance in [Stevenson's] personal and literary lives'. Here, he 'met Andrew Lang, spent time with Sidney Colvin, tried opium, and decisively committed

himself to professional writing […]. In short, as Louis Scott notes, "RLS grew up in Menton"'.[28] Equally, however, as the launch of his literary career coincided with his first unaccompanied stay abroad, Stevenson also can be seen to develop the practices required of an itinerant author during this trip. When Colvin expressed an interest in his 'Covenanting stories', Stevenson wrote immediately to Baxter, asking him to send them to his Menton address 'without delay, as it is of a little importance to yours truly, or may be' (*Letters*, I, 418). Although nothing came of it at the time, this was not owing to any negligence from Baxter, who obligingly sent 'The Curate of Anstruther's Bottle' and 'The Devil on Cramond Sands', the stories arriving a little over three weeks after Stevenson's request. As Booth and Mehew note, in later years Baxter became Stevenson's legal, business and financial adviser, handling cheques from editors, keeping accounts and sending the author money during his extended periods abroad (*Letters*, I, 42). Here, in this exchange from Menton, we can see the inception of the practical role with which Baxter would be entrusted later in the author's career. Stevenson's extended trip to France prepared Baxter for the responsibilities he would later assume – duties which enabled the author to participate in markets thousands of miles from where he was based.

In these early years, however, it was Colvin's influence that supplied the real momentum to Stevenson's literary career. The author's initial gratitude to Colvin for his extensive advice concerning 'Roads' increased rapidly when the essay was accepted and became his first paid piece of writing. Originally submitted to (and rejected by) the *Saturday Review*, the essay ultimately appeared under the pseudonym 'L. S. Stoneven' in *The Portfolio*. By this time, Colvin had been

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[28] Stephen Donovan, 'Stevenson and Popular Entertainment', in *Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Ambrosini and Dury, pp. 70–82 (p. 75).

contributing regularly for two years and was on friendly terms with the editor, Philip

Hamerton, and proprietor, Richmond Seeley.[29] Before 'Roads' was accepted,

Stevenson had written to Sitwell, declaring that he did 'not know how [he would]

find the words to thank' Colvin for all his advice (*Letters*, I, 311). By the time

Colvin had left Menton after his extended stay with Stevenson, the author directly

acknowledged his reliance on the Professor, beginning to recognise the important

position Colvin would hold in his career. In another letter to Sitwell, he observed:

> I am beginning as I said yesterday, to weary for S.C.; it is odd how soon he
> takes a sort of adviser-position in my mind; I feel as if I should never be able
> to take another step all my life without his advice. (I, 470)

This declaration of his dependence on Colvin is not mere hyperbole: Stevenson's

growing reliance on his 'advisor' is evident in correspondence from this period.

While he was writing 'Ordered South' in January 1874, Stevenson sent a letter to

Colvin telling him a draft was almost finished, but that he would wait for his arrival

before transcribing it, 'lest perhaps it should be unfit for human food' (I, 462). There

is evidence to suggest that Colvin himself cultivated such dependence at this stage.

Months earlier, Stevenson mentioned that Alexander Macmillan had told him to send

in a manuscript and proceeded to ask Colvin whether he should do so. Clearly, the

immediate answer was 'no': once Colvin arrived in Menton and gave his approval of

'Ordered South', he took responsibility for the essay's placement and sent it to

Macmillan's Magazine himself, where it was published in May 1874.

Stevenson's reliance on Colvin at this point in his career is hardly surprising,

as through his own established connections the slightly senior man opened doors into

the London literary circle, facilitating the development of Stevenson's first literary

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[29] Robert-Louis Abrahamson, '"The Essays must fall from me": An Outline of Stevenson's Career as an Essayist', *JSS*, 9 (2012), 9–42 (p. 11).

network. Before Stevenson left Menton, Colvin had secured him work for the

Cornhill Magazine, writing an essay on the romances of Victor Hugo.[30] Leslie

Stephen, the editor of the magazine, had originally offered the commission to

Colvin, but agreed to entrust it to the as yet unknown writer. He was, perhaps,

reassured by Colvin's involvement in the process; as Booth and Mehew note, the

manuscript of the essay (now held at Yale) shows that the older man made a number

of minor additions and alterations that Stevenson accepted (*Letters*, II, 18), all his

work from this period passing under Colvin's mediating eye. As Abrahamson states,

the *Cornhill* became 'the most important vehicle for Stevenson's essays' during this

period, [31] while Stephen became a key supporter of Stevenson in his own right,

sending the young author 'a nice long letter (four sides)' in response to his first

contribution on Hugo (*Letters*, II, 8). It was while in Menton that Colvin introduced

Stevenson to Andrew Lang; although his fellow Scot did not initially 'impress'

Stevenson 'deeply in any way' (I, 483), he soon became a close friend and ally

within London's 'world of letters', supporting the author's election to the exclusive

Savile Club. Founded in 1868, the Savile was designed to be more relaxed than other

London clubs, welcoming 'young men of promise', while nevertheless retaining a

strict and careful process of election.[32]

　　　Stevenson's acceptance into the Savile Club was the apex of these first few

years of his literary career. Whilst, as Furnas points out, Stevenson 'probably owed

[his election] rather to Colvin's good offices among his fellow-founders of the Savile

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[30] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Victor Hugo's Romances', *Cornhill Magazine*, 30 (August 1874), 179–94.

[31] Abrahamson, 'Stevenson's Career as an Essayist', p. 17.

[32] Robert-Louis Abrahamson, '"Here gather daily those young eaglets of glory": Robert Louis Stevenson, the Savile Club and the Suicide Club', *Colloque de la SFEVE Bordeaux*, 81 (2014) <https://journals.openedition.org/cve/1964> [accessed 14 November 2018] (para. 2 of 47).

than to a marked reputation in literature',[33] it was nonetheless a significant moment, a recognition of his place within the London literary establishment. Colvin proposed Stevenson on 3 June 1874 and was supported by Lang and Fleeming Jenkin, a Professor of Engineering whom Stevenson knew from the University of Edinburgh. In her study of place and literary practice, Angharad Saunders terms such groups 'creative cluster[s]': 'a gathering of individuals that sees in spatial proximity opportunities for information exchange, professional advancement and modish or niche lifestyles.'[34] Although only intermittently able to take advantage of the 'spatial proximity' afforded by the Club, Stevenson was well aware of the opportunities it presented.

In a letter to his mother during this trip to London (June 1874), he appears positively giddy about the new circles in which he is moving, proclaiming that he cannot give her 'an account of the voyage owing to being so busy with all manner of Appletons, cool Groves, and Leslie Stephens's' (*Letters*, II, 23).[35] While he blames the 'hysteric gaiety' of this letter on the 'champagne' he had with dinner, the tone continues into his correspondence from the following days, where he gives an outline of the vibrant social scene he has joined:

> I wonder where I was with news. Had I been to see Burne-Jones's pictures? Had I been to lunch with Leslie Stephen? Had I been to lunch with Hennessy, a nice yankee artist […]? Had I been to dine with Champneys? Had I been to Champneys after dinner? Had I been at a big club dinner with Dilke and Mundella and divers others? I know not, O I know not. (II, 27)

Such 'hysteric gaiety' is understandable; this sudden immersion into the literary milieu of London presented new and exciting opportunities for Stevenson. Over the

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[33] Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 101.
[34] Angharad Saunders, *Place and the Scene of Literary Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 21.
[35] Charles Edward Cutts Birch Appleton (1841–79) was founder and editor of the weekly journal, *The Academy*; George Grove (1820–1900) was editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*.

next few months, he wrote reviews for *The Academy* and essays for *The Portfolio*, while the *Cornhill* published his 'Victor Hugo's Romances'.[36] By September 1874, he was 'steadily doing three pages a day' of an essay on John Knox for Grove, who, he tells Colvin, fell 'on [his] neck and wept gratefully' for the contribution (II, 52).[37]

While Stevenson himself of course played a significant part in cultivating these professional relationships, it was in fact Colvin who lay at the root of almost all the author's early networks. It was Colvin who proposed Stevenson's election to the Savile Club, who recommended his work to editors and who introduced him to publishers and other writers. It was in Colvin's house in Hampstead that Stevenson stayed during this first trip to London as a member of the Club. Yet it was not solely through his influential social contacts that Colvin employed his support of Stevenson: he also leveraged his own reputation and status within the literary establishment, investing in Stevenson the symbolic capital he himself had accumulated through his contributions to the leading periodicals of the day. In his foundational study of the production of value in cultural goods, Bourdieu introduces the figure of the 'art trader', who 'can proclaim the value of the author he defends' and '"invests his prestige" in the author's cause'.[38] Colvin's authority to assert the value of Stevenson's work was itself a 'credit-based value', dependent on his own '"credit" with a set of agents who constitute "connections", whose value is proportionate to the credit they themselves command'. It was not, then, Colvin alone who enabled Stevenson to develop a reputation in this intellectual circle, but the

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[36] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Review: The Ballads and Songs of Scotland', The Academy (August 1874), 142–43; 'Review: Scottish Rivers', The Academy (August 1874), 173; 'Review: A Quiet Corner of England', *The Academy* (December 1874), 602–03; Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Notes on the Movements of Young Children', *The Portfolio* (August 1874), 115–17; 'On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places', *The Portfolio* (November 1874), 173–76.
[37] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'John Knox and his Relations to Women', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 32 (September–October 1875), 446–56, 520–31.
[38] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 77.

dynamics of the 'field of production' itself, 'in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated'.[39] It is Colvin, however, who inducted Stevenson into 'the cycle of consecration';[40] like Bourdieu's art trader he added value to the author's productions by investing in him his own credit. Unlike the art trader, who takes commission, however, Colvin did not directly benefit financially from his early involvement in Stevenson's career. Perhaps, from the symbolic capital he had invested, it was a reciprocal symbolic return that Colvin in turn received: he is, after all, remembered now almost solely through his connection to Stevenson.

It is difficult to know for sure how much debt Stevenson and his admirers owe to Colvin; it is conceivable that the author would have forged a successful literary career without his support. Colvin was, however, the most influential figure in Stevenson's early years as a writer, his singular conviction in the author's abilities acting as a driving force in the younger man's career. As Stevenson himself wrote, 'it was [Colvin] who paved [his] way in letters', paying tribute to the significance of this support years later in a snippet of autobiography:

> It is very hard for me, even if I were merely addressing the unborn, to say what I owe to and what I think of this most trusty and noble-minded man. If I am what I am and where I am, if I have done anything at all or done anything well, his is the credit. (*Memoirs*, 166)

'Like continuing another man's book': Mobile Identity and Unstable Authorship

Stevenson's reliance on Colvin in the first years of his career is undeniable, and his gratitude in the previous quotation is palpable. Yet, while Colvin certainly smoothed the author's path into the profession, when examining Stevenson's correspondence

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[39] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 78.
[40] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 77.

from this period, one senses that this belief in the centrality of another man's role in

his professional achievements marginalises Stevenson's own position – at least in his

conception of himself. He lacks confidence in his writing ability at the beginning of

his career, declaring 'Roads' 'quite unfit for any possible magazine' (*Letters*, I, 299).

When, at this initial stage, Colvin offers him the opportunity to write reviews for the

Pall Mall Gazette, he turns it down, explaining: 'I do not think I am fit – that's the

short and long of it. I am no good yet' (I, 307). Abrahamson asserts that, rather than

not believing himself fit for the job, Stevenson 'probably did not think the job fit for

him. He had higher ambitions'.[41] Yet, at this point, before Stevenson had any work

professionally published, such confidence seems unlikely. In fact, given that

Stevenson went on to write a number of reviews over the next few years, and to

publish in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, his rejection of Colvin's offer was more likely

indicative of the uncertainties that characterise this early stage in his career. Indeed,

it is not simply a lack of confidence that his writing from this period reveals. There is

also a consistent preoccupation in his correspondence with the instability of

personality and identity, each dependent upon and susceptible to the influences of

people and place. Such concerns are discernible in his first book, *An Inland Voyage*;

not only does the narrator possess a fragile and inconsistent identity, but Stevenson's

own authorial presence is insecure. Whether from a belief that his own role is of

secondary importance compared to Colvin's involvement or simply due to the

unpredictable nature of his fledging career, Stevenson held an unstable sense of

himself as an author at this time, his concern with inconsistent subjectivity

translating to fluctuating and contradictory conceptions of authorship.

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[41] Abrahamson, 'Stevenson's Career as an Essayist', p. 18.

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis follows the principles of the 'new biography', or, as James Clifford terms it, 'ethnobiography', which aims to dispel the 'myth of personal coherence'.[42] Clifford states that 'the nearer the background can be brought to the lived surface, the better', as this allows one to portray 'a more open, less complete, person, and thus to create a less centred biography'.[43] Rather than tracking an individual (who has a fixed and coherent identity) over time, he advocates tracing the 'narrative of transindividual occasions' that make up a life,[44] so that 'individuals becomes meeting points for influences, no longer static but mobile, effusive, decentred, a process not a thing.'[45] With Stevenson, this objective is easier than with most. In both his letters and his literary productions, during this early stage of his career at least, he continually acknowledged his shifting identity, influenced as it is by people and places. Following his return to Edinburgh after spending the summer with Frances Sitwell and Sidney Colvin in Cockfield Rectory, he wrote to the former: 'the stimulus of your approval and Colvin's has died a good deal off, and I find myself face to face with the weak, inefficacious personality that I knew before' (*Letters*, I, 307). Stevenson implies here that, as well as furnishing introductions and recommendations to the London literary elite, Sitwell and Colvin also provide support that changes how he views himself (in this case for the better). In the south with his new enthusiastic and well-connected companions, Stevenson could envisage himself in the desired role of author and acted accordingly. Yet back home in Edinburgh he saw himself become 'dyspeptic, mooning, [and] useless' (I, 341),

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[42] James Clifford, '"Hanging Up Looking Glasses at Odd Corners": Ethnobiographical Prospects', in *Studies in Biography*, ed. by Daniel Aaron (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 41–56 (pp. 46, 42).
[43] Clifford, 'Ethnobiographical Prospects', p. 46.
[44] Clifford, 'Ethnobiographical Prospects', p. 52.
[45] Michael Shortland and Richard Yeo (eds.), 'Introduction', in *Telling Lives in Science: Essays on Scientific Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1–44 (p. 14).

unable to sustain his new literary identity without the appropriate company and
surroundings.

It appears, then, that Stevenson perceived his locality as equally important an
influence as the people with whom he interacted. In another letter to Sitwell, he
dreamed 'of going south […] to where [his] summer dwells' in order to exorcise the
'brute that is growing gradually here in the north into the usurped personality of
Louis Stevenson' (I, 341). When his wish was granted and he was 'ordered south' to
convalesce in Menton, he reflected again on the change to his subjectivity that time
and travel effects:

> I have begun my 'Walt Whitman' again seriously; Many winds have blown
> since I last laid it down, when sickness took me in Edinburgh. It seems
> almost like an ill considered jest to take up these old sentences, written by so
> different a person under circumstances so different […]; It is like continuing
> another man's book […] (I, 474)

When he left Menton and was finally able to read his first published essay in print,
Stevenson pursued this idea further, declaring: 'it was not I [who wrote "Roads"]:
that was conceived and written when my life was in flower' (I, 506), implying that
his current self was significantly different from nine months earlier. Such statements
can of course be read as the self-indulgent musings of a young man who is yet to
experience much of life or the world. Yet they are nevertheless interesting when
considered in the context of Stevenson's fledgling career, which, at this point, is
entirely unstable and unpredictable. His apparently fluid and volatile identity mirrors
the undependable nature of his chosen profession.

Such concerns are also evident in Stevenson's first book. Even when *An
Inland Voyage* is published in 1878, over four years after his first essay appeared in
print, Stevenson's future was anything but secure. Having met and fallen in love
with his future wife, Fanny Osbourne, in Barbizon, his need for financial

independence had become even more pressing. Despite writing regularly for various

periodicals, Stevenson's earnings from this period averaged little more than £100 per

year,[46] barely enough to support himself let alone a wife and her children. Physically

he was equally unsettled, moving continuously between Edinburgh, London and

Paris, where Fanny was staying until her return to America in July 1878. Yet, by the

time of Fanny's departure, Stevenson position as an author had become more secure.

While still deeply troubled and uncertain about many aspects of his life (personal

and financial), he had, at least, reached a significant literary milestone: publishing

his first book. As I will demonstrate in the final section of this chapter, by the time

he is writing his second travel book in 1879, Stevenson is more confident and secure

in the role of author. In *An Inland Voyage*, however, the uncertainty and insecurities

from the first years of his career are exposed, exhibiting, as Colvin described it, all

'the self-consciousness […] of a young writer publishing his first book'.[47]

In making the connection here between Stevenson's style and the early stage

of his career, Colvin points particularly to the preface of *An Inland Voyage* as the

section where this self-consciousness most 'betrays itself'.[48] This is certainly true;

Stevenson opens with a half-apology, half-justification for including this foreword:

> To equip so small a book with a preface is, I am half afraid, to sin against
> proportion. But a preface is more than an author can resist, for it is the reward
> of his labours. When the foundation stone is laid, the architect appears with
> his plans, and struts for an hour before the public eye. So with the writer in
> his preface. (*IV*, xvii)

Uncomfortably aware of his position as author, Stevenson refers to it within the first

lines. In his analogy of the architect, he betrays an even greater self-conscious

alertness to his place in relation to the text, illuminating his own specific and unique

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[46] Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 104.
[47] Sidney Colvin, from an unsigned review, in *The Athenaeum*, 1 June 1878, quoted in *CH*, p. 50.
[48] Colvin, quoted in *CH*, p. 50.

function by acknowledging that, as with the architect, his is only one of many roles

in the production of the book. Stevenson goes on to describe the 'distressing'

realisation that he 'might not only be the first to read these pages, but the last as

well': 'The more I thought, the more I disliked the notion; until the distaste grew into

a sort of panic terror, and I rushed into this Preface, which is no more than an

advertisement for readers' (p. xvii). This introduction is certainty not, however, the

confident 'advertisement for readers' that we might expect. As McCracken-Flesher

asserts, 'he does not work to sell the book, making no argument for it or for the

pleasures of canoeing through Europe'.[49] His focus is not directed outward toward

the reader but turned back on himself, the preface appearing more like the

uncomfortable debut of Stevenson's performance as author than a promotion for the

ensuing text.

The intense self-consciousness of the preface does not quite continue into the

body of the book, but Stevenson's authorial presence nevertheless remains unstable.

Whilst acknowledging in the preface that it was he himself who undertook the

journey described, Stevenson refrains from using the first-person pronoun for much

of the text. In the opening paragraph, the confident 'I' is notably absent:

> The *Cigarette* went off in a splash and a bubble of small breaking water.
> Next moment the *Arethusa* was after her. […] [I]n a stroke or two the canoes
> were away out in the middle of the Scheldt, and all steamers, and stevedores,
> and other 'long shore vanities were left behind. (*IV*, 3)

The narratorial voice here is passive (the canoes 'were away'), while Stevenson and

his companion (Walter Simpson) are referred to by the names of their vessels, a

metonymic technique that continues throughout the text. Describing his own trials in

proving his nationality, Stevenson writes: 'to pass the frontier, even in a train, is a

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[49] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 92.

difficult matter for the *Arethusa*' (p. 17). Sue Zlosnik argues that by referring to the

two men 'throughout by the names of their canoes', Stevenson establishes 'a

distance between an authorial identity and a narratorial identity'.[50] Yet he does not

employ this practice 'throughout': even within this same passage the author shifts

between grammatical persons, seemingly unable to resist drifting into the first-

person singular:

> To pass the frontier, even in a train, is a difficult matter for the *Arethusa*. He
> is, somehow or other, a marked man for the official eye. […] He is a born
> British subject, yet has never succeeded in persuading a single official of his
> nationality. […] For the life of me I cannot understand it. I, too, have been
> knolled to church and sat at good men's feasts, but I bear no mark of it. I am
> as strange as a Jack Indian to their official spectacles. I might come from any
> part of the globe, it seems, except from where I do. (*IV*, 17)

The ambiguity he claims for his national identity is mirrored in the syntax: the

narrator switches between first and third person within the space of a paragraph,

Stevenson's description of his ambiguous nationality here in fact revealing a self-

conscious and unstable sense of his position as author.

Indeed, while complaining about the inability of officials to recognise his

nationality, in *An Inland Voyage* Stevenson himself makes contradictory assertions

concerning his national identity. Again, within a few lines, he shifts his use of

pronouns, moving between one national camp and another with apparent ease:

> We talk very much about our honesty in England. It is a good rule to be on our
> guard wherever you hear great protestations about a very little piece of virtue.
> If the English could only hear how they are spoken of abroad, they might
> confine themselves for a while to remedying the fact, and perhaps even when
> that was done, give us fewer of their airs. (p. 68)

The two first-person plural pronouns in this passage include Stevenson in two

different national groups: the 'we' in the first line groups him with the English and

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[50] Zlosnik, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and the End of Wandering', p. 243.

their talk of honesty, while, by the final line, he includes himself in the ambiguous 'us' (presumably all other nations) who have to tolerate the 'airs' of the English. Later in this chapter, I consider Stevenson's ambivalent relationships with both Edinburgh and London, alongside the formative influence of travel on his career, in order to argue that his identity as an author is not located in one place but is, instead, linked to movement. Indeed, inconsistent national identity in an increasingly globalised world becomes a recurrent feature of Stevenson's writing after he leaves Europe, as the following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate. In *An Inland Voyage*, however, such liminality is reserved for Stevenson himself: as the narrator in this passage, he is does not even remain consistent about his national belonging within the space of a paragraph, syntactically crossing borders in a reflection of his actual, repeated geographical movements.

This liminality of the narratorial or authorial identity is not an isolated incident in *An Inland Voyage*. In fact, Stevenson-as-narrator assumes different roles throughout the text, experimenting with various personae as opportunities arise. In one instance, he meets 'a pair of young fellows who imagined [he] was the *Cigarette's* servant' (p. 38). Instead of correcting them, Stevenson immediately adopts the character 'of a malcontent footman', complaining about this 'absurd voyage' his employer is undertaking. In doing so, he has his own character and enterprise reflected back at him, as the men proceed to defend the 'courage' (p. 38) of the venture and the man who chose to complete it. Indeed, this practice of experimenting with different personae is a central feature of the text, and another example of the idea of fluctuating identity in Stevenson's writing from this time. It is, of course, travel that allows for such experimentations: as the book documents Stevenson's movements between places, it also demonstrates how the self can be

altered through such mobility. The figure of the 'pedlar' is one such persona, a

person who in McCracken-Flesher's words, 'move[s] between and slip[s] below the

social categories defined by belonging in place'.[51] As described previously,

Stevenson depicts the hostility directed towards such mobile people; yet he also

demonstrates how mobile this persona is in itself, reflecting that: '[w]e were

becoming lions in Landrecies, who had been only pedlars the night before in Point'

(p. 42).

Certainly, Stevenson made some effort to cultivate this misapprehension: his

bohemian attire belied his respectable status, just as in 'the southern slums and

suburbs' of London it 'aroused the suspicions' of policemen, as he attempted to be

'taken up as a rogue and vagabond'.[52] Yet, while this misreading of Stevenson as a

pedlar is at least partly deliberate on his part, the text also demonstrates the essential

fragility of class distinctions when not secured by or rooted in 'place'. When he

discovers that his behaviour is unable to rectify the impression given by his

appearance, Stevenson reflects that

> manners and bearings have not a wider currency than bank-notes. You have
> only to get far enough out of your beat, and all your accomplished airs will
> go for nothing. These Hainaulters could see no difference between us and the
> average pedlar. (*IV*, 27)

When realising, however, that his meal is 'quite a banquet' compared to his host's, it

occurs to Stevenson that even 'a pedlar [is] a great man in a labourer's ale-house',

concluding that 'the more you look into it, the more infinite are the class distinctions

among men' (p. 28). Pierce argues that *An Inland Voyage* surprised its Victorian

readers by presenting a 'narrator who seemed to forget he was part of the nation and

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[51] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 93.
[52] Colvin, *Memories and Notes*, p. 109.

class reading his text rather than the nation and class about whom he wrote'.[53] Yet, as evidenced in the passage above, the text's understanding of such distinctions is more complex than Pierce allows. Rather than aligning himself with 'the nation and class about whom he wrote', Stevenson challenges the very notion of such coherent and consistent identities, particularly among mobile people. As we have seen, one's position in society is fragile, largely dependent on the perception of others and susceptible to the vagaries of people and place. Indeed, the locals' interpretation of the travellers' identities has such an effect as to challenge their own conceptions of themselves: after once again falling prey to the misapprehension, Stevenson and Simpson begin to wonder whether they might, in fact, 'be pedlars, after all' (*IV*, 28).

The concept of unstable identity that Stevenson presents in his correspondence – an identity which is reconstituted through movement between places – is, then, also a central concern running through his first book. For James Wilson, travel writing 'allowed [Stevenson] his nearest approach to autobiography, to a full-length self portrait'; it was a form through which he could 'reveal himself', could 'be a figure in every landscape.'[54] If *An Inland Voyage* does paint a self-portrait, it is a decidedly blurred and indistinct one. As an author, Stevenson is self-conscious, acutely aware of his position and unable to inhabit it comfortably. As a narrator, he is ambiguous: at times the third-person reporter of the two canoeists' journey, at others the clear voice of the author himself. His nationality and his class identity are equally inconsistent, while such distinctions are themselves revealed to be vulnerable and impermanent. Arata takes a contrary view to Wilson: rather than reading the travel narrative as an approach to autobiography, he suggests that

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[53] Pierce, 'Stevenson's First Book', p. 134.
[54] James Wilson, 'Landscape with Figures', in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Andrew Noble (London: Vision, 1983), pp. 73–96 (p. 90).

Stevenson does not 'take more than a passing interest in himself'; *An Inland Voyage*

'is not an inward journey into his own psyche' but is 'written in precisely the state of

ecstatic stupor it describes' in the final part of the text.[55] In this instance, the

rhythmic pattern of rowing lulls Stevenson into a trance-like state, in which he

reflects on the unstable condition of his subjectivity:

> There was less *me* and more *not-me* than I was accustomed to expect. I
> looked on upon somebody else, who managed the paddling […]; my own
> body seemed to have no more intimate relation to me than the canoe or the
> river, or the river banks.
> (*IV*, 93)

While not necessarily a 'journey into his psyche', perhaps the dispersal of

subjectivity that this 'ecstatic stupor' elicits, alongside the repeated depictions of his

shifting identity, is a reflection of the uncertainty inherent in this stage of

Stevenson's life. It certainly corresponds with much of the content of his letters:

unconvinced of his own aptitude, unsettled geographically and concerned about the

instability of his chosen career, Stevenson views his identity as equally fragile and

subject to change. In this preoccupation with the mutable self we even begin to see

the focus on doubling that came to be such a feature in his literary oeuvre. He can be

writing from Edinburgh and yet assert that he is somewhere else entirely: 'I am all in

Suffolk two summers past: there is not much of me alone here in the winter –

nothing but my wicked carcase' (*Letters*, II,108).

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Alongside such depictions of unstable identity, another testament to the uncertainty

engulfing Stevenson at this point in his life can be found in his contradictory

conceptions of authorship. When Colvin attempts to arrange a contract with *The*

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[55] Arata, 'Value of Idleness', p. 4.

Portfolio for a regular series of essays written by Stevenson, the author expresses

outrage at the suggestion: 'My dear Colvin, […] Do you imagine I could ever write

an essay a month, or promise an essay even every three months? I declare I would

rather die than enter into any such arrangement. The Essays must fall from me,

Essay by Essay, as they ripen.' (*Letters*, II, 32) In a similar vein, Stevenson rebuffs

Sitwell's proposal that he 'settl[es] to a book', declaring that ideas 'must *come* to

me. I can do but little; I mostly wait and look out' (II, 46). Abrahamson suggests that

Stevenson rejected Colvin's plan for the series of essays because 'he wanted to be

free to choose his subjects, and not feel confined to the topics required for an art

magazine'.[56] Considering, however, that at this point in July 1874 Stevenson had had

only three short pieces published professionally, and had just recently returned from

his convalescence in France, Claire Harman's suggestion that 'the amount of work

Colvin was suggesting […] seemed impossible' appears equally likely.[57] In fact, the

Romantic conception of an author awaiting inspiration evoked by Stevenson in these

passages is entirely contradicted by descriptions of his working practices elsewhere.

As Daiches explains, from his earliest years Stevenson worked hard at perfecting his

writing, 'experimenting with prose styles, "playing the sedulous ape," imitating one

model after another, in order to provide himself with the necessary facility'.[58] This

sudden reversion to a Romantic ideal in his response to Colvin, where creative

genius provides literature like a tree provides fruit, is so out of character as to appear

false – a sudden, defensive reaction against a level of production he does not believe

he can sustain.

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[56] Abrahamson, 'Stevenson's Career as an Essayist', p. 13.
[57] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 107.
[58] Daiches, *Stevenson: A Revaluation*, p. 149.

Perhaps equally oppositional to a Romantic notion of authorship is Stevenson's regular insistence on the exigency of earning money from his writing. It is in Menton, at the inception of his career, that the urgency of financial remuneration becomes a key feature of his correspondence. Writing to Sitwell in November 1873, he explained how 'this money question begins to take more and more importance in my eyes every day' (*Letters*, I, 380). A week later, he wrote: 'If Colvin does not think that I shall be able to support myself soon by literature, I shall give it up and go (horrible as the thought is to me) into an office of some sort; the first and main question is, that I must live by my own hands' (I, 387). This, as it transpires, was an empty threat: it took years before Stevenson was able to support himself through writing. It does, however, reveal the tension between the type of literature he aspired to produce (a path encouraged and assisted by his friends within the industry) and the economic realities he faced.

Christopher MacLachlan states that 'there was not much money in the kind of occasional writing that' occupied Stevenson in the 1870s, noting a 'hidden but worrying contrast between the smoothness and insouciance of [Stevenson's] early writings […] and the precariousness of his finances.'[59] In fact, it is this 'insouciance', or apparent indifference to commercial considerations, that lies at the heart of what it means to be a 'man of letters' in the late nineteenth century. Peter McDonald describes the 'strict code of writerly conduct'[60] that such a title demanded, quoting from an article in the *National Observer* in 1891, at this point edited by Henley: 'The man of letters writes not for the many-headed monster; it is enough for him if he please himself and his friends. If once he listen to the voice of

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[59] Christopher MacLachlan (ed.), 'Introduction', in *TDC*, pp. xiii–xxxv (p. xvi).
[60] Peter D. McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1800–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 33.

the great public, or yield to the tinkling, he is a traitor to his art, and henceforth a stranger to literature.'[61] As McDonald goes on to explain, such requirements do not mean financial interests are irrelevant, but they must remain secondary concerns. This constraint perhaps explains the contradiction apparent in the different forms of Stevenson's writing; commercial interests appear secondary in the literature he produces for public consumption, but 'take more and more importance' in letters to his close friends.

At the heart of this evident contradiction lies the question of who and what determines the value of a literary work. While the financial worth of, say, *An Inland Voyage* depended on its popularity with the public at large, commercial success was not an accurate indicator of value at this point in Stevenson's career. In the 1870s, he was operating within what Bourdieu terms 'the *field of restricted production*' – a 'system producing cultural goods [...] objectively destined for a public of producers of cultural goods':

> In contrast to the field of large-scale cultural production, which submits to the laws of competition for the conquest of the largest possible market, the field of restricted production tends to develop its own criteria for the evaluation of its products, thus achieving the truly cultural recognition accorded by the peer group whose members are both privileged clients and competitors.[62]

Stevenson's status as an author was not defined in this period by the number of copies sold, but through a process of 'co-optation, understood as the circular relations of reciprocal recognition among peers'.[63] This process of ascribing value resulted in the contradiction between Stevenson's elegant but commercially unviable early writings and the monetary focus of many of his letters: while his reputation

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[61] 'Literature and Democracy', *National Observer*, 11 April 1891, pp. 528–29 (p. 528).
[62] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 115.
[63] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 116.

within the literary establishment did not depend on financial success, his

independence from his parents did.

Stevenson himself acknowledged these contrasting indicators of value,

realising that one might succeed at one level while failing considerably at the other.

In a letter about the reception of *An Inland Voyage*, he observed: 'the critics […]

made a prodigious row about it; but the public abstain from any alarming patronage'

(*Letters*, II, 270). The book was, as Pierce puts it, 'a commercial flop': 'despite being

priced at a relatively affordable *7s 6d*', only '485 copies were purchased in its first

year'; Stevenson 'never saw the shilling-per-copy royalties that were to begin after

the sale of 1000 copies'.[64] The 'prodigious row' of the critics came in no small part

from his well-placed friends and acquaintances. One of the book's most positive

reviews appeared in *London*; although unsigned, Maixner suggests it was most likely

written by Henley, who edited the publication at the time. The review asserts that

'*An Inland Voyage* is a book among ten thousand', written by an author who dares

'to be as much of a sensualist as an exquisite intellect will let him'.[65] Colvin, in his

anonymous review in *The Athenaeum*, is more restrained, less hyperbolic.

Nevertheless, in the guise of a potentially impartial critic he expresses great hope for

Stevenson's future, agreeing 'that he has both gifts and promise, and one inestimable

gift in especial – charm'.[66] Yet it is the review from P. G. Hamerton, founder of *The*

Portfolio, that offers the most interesting example of co-optation at work. Writing in

The Academy, Hamerton appeared equally inclined towards hyperbole, asking: 'I

wonder how many people there are in England who know that Robert Louis

Stevenson is, in his own way […], one of the most perfect writers living, one of the

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[64] Pierce, 'Stevenson's First Book', p. 135.
[65] From an unsigned review in *London*, 25 May 1878, quoted in *CH*, pp. 47, 48.
[66] Sidney Colvin, quoted in *CH*, p. 52.

very few who may yet do something that will become classical?[67] Following a visit

to Hamerton's home in France, Stevenson told his mother that the literary man

would 'send [him] his cuts and cuffs in private, after having liberally administered

his *kisses coram public*' (*Letters*, II, 283). Here is an acknowledgment of the

significance of peer recognition in the British literary circle at this time, with

Hamerton reserving his critique of the young author's first book for a private

audience, while his public commendation contributed to determining the text's

literary value.

In this same letter to his mother, Stevenson declared that 'of all the pleasant

parts of my profession, I think the spirit of other men of letters makes the

pleasantest' (II, 283). Pleasant or not, his relationships within the literary circle are

certainly one of the most important components of his career at this point,

considering the significance of his peers' judgement in the shaping of his artistic

status. Yet, while crucially important in establishing his position within the literary

establishment, such emphatic reviews may not have been entirely beneficial to

Stevenson's early profile. In fact, Paul Maixner argues that, rather than simply

having no correlation to commercial success, the emphatic approval of members of

the literary elite directly injured his popularity with the wider reading public. He

suggests that the 'extravagant claims and predictions' made by 'sympathetic friends

and reviewers […] provoked a reflex of antagonism on the part of readers or led

them to approach Stevenson with the wrong expectations' (*CH*, 2). This pattern of

exaltation and rejection continued throughout Stevenson's career and after his death:

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[67] P. G. Hamerton, review in *The Academy*, 22 June 1878, quoted in *CH*, p. 56.

the near veneration that greeted his departure was followed by a vicious backlash in the twentieth century.[68]

While Stevenson may have expressed various and contradictory conceptions of authorship in his correspondence, it was in his actions that we can perceive his developing understanding of himself an author. Despite his protestations about the urgency of earning money, Stevenson displayed a resolute commitment to his artistic integrity even in this early period of his career. In a letter to Colvin in February 1876, he complained of Leslie Stephen's 'tepid' response to an article, continuing: 'Moreover he proposes to shorten it, and I, who want money and *money soon*, and not glory and the illustration of the English language, I feel as if my poverty were going to consent' (*Letters*, II, 170–71). Yet he did not consent. Stephen advised that there was more chance of early publication if he shortened the essay, but Stevenson declined (II, 170). Despite writing only days earlier that he had been 'absolutely prevented' from leaving home 'by the state of [his] purse and [his] debts' (II, 167), he refused to compromise his essay for the sake of more immediate payment. Abrahamson suggests such aesthetic commitment is typical of the author, who, while relying 'on his personal connections with influential editors and publishers', insisted 'throughout on upholding his own standards'.[69] When, in 1877, Stevenson believed his 'time was broken up and [his] temper worried' by the demands of contributing 'short-notice journalism' to *London*, he wrote to its editor, Robert Glasgow Brown: 'As neither of us are very much pleased with my productions, I should think the best way would be to cease them *quam primum*. […] In the meantime, I cannot have any

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[68] Ian Duncan describes the '"headlong fall" of Stevenson's once-exalted reputation in the generation since his death', arguing the 'fall really became headlong with the onset of modernism, and the retrospective normalisation of Victorian fiction around the novel'. Ian Duncan, 'Stevenson and Fiction', *EC*, pp. 11–26 (p. 12).

[69] Abrahamson, 'Stevenson's Career as an Essayist', p. 9.

more of these barbarous five-minute's orders. I must have time.' (*Letters*, II, 201)

Shortly after this letter, Stevenson did indeed cease contributing this style of copy to

the publication, dissatisfied with both the manner of working and the writing he

produced. Thus, while he did not embody the Romantic ideal of a commercially

disinterested, natural genius, Stevenson did refuse to bend to market pressures. He

worked tirelessly to hone his craft but was unwilling to compromise his aesthetic

choices; the poor sales of *An Inland Voyage* did not alter his direction, and there was

little change of style from this first book of travel to his second: *Travels with a*

Donkey in the Cévennes.

'I feel myself in the uttermost parts of the earth': Dislocation and the Itinerant
Author

With prominent similarities in both style and content, *Travels with a Donkey in the*

Cévennes is often read as a 'charming counterpart' to *An Inland Voyage*.[70] Yet, while

in many ways such a reading is accurate, Stevenson's second book of travel also

reflects the significant development he underwent during this period of his life.

Written in large part during his 1876 journey through France, *An Inland Voyage*

marked a significant point in Stevenson's career: it was his debut book following the

uncertainty and strains of the first years of professional authorship. By the time he

published *Travels with a Donkey*, however, he had two books already under his belt

(*An Inland Voyage* and *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*), and a greater confidence in

his authorial position is discernible in the narrative voice. Further evidence of a

growing assurance of his place in the literary market is available in his

correspondence. The example given near the close of the previous section, when

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[70] MacLachlan, 'Introduction', p. xxi.

Stevenson condemned Brown for his 'barbarous five-minute's orders' before ceasing

to write for the publication, is supported by other similar interactions. A few months

prior to this altercation, Stevenson had complained to Colvin that he had received

'no word from Grove about [his] "Idlers" since he acknowledged receipt of it, more

than three months ago' (*Letters*, II, 194), and proceeded to write to the editor asking

for the essay back.[71] While he still asked for Colvin's advice, Stevenson was here, as

in the later example with Brown, taking control of his literary output. In his brief,

perfunctory letter to Grove, where he not only requested the return of the essay but

suggested it was not suitable for *Macmillan's Magazine* in the first place, he

demonstrated how far he had come from his first years in the profession, when all his

interactions with editors would pass through Colvin's punctilious mediation.

This developing confidence in his professional identity can also be perceived

in Stevenson's literary writing. Published in 1879, *Travels with a Donkey* marks the

end of this phase of Stevenson's career, his final published work before he departed

for America in August of that year. Since writing *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson had

not only contributed to a variety of literary publications, but had published his

second book *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* in 1878.[72] Writing to his mother in

September of that year, Stevenson called *Edinburgh* 'a kind of book nobody would

ever care to read', yet confidently declares: 'but none of the young men could have

done it better than I have, which is always a consideration'.[73] Again, here we see

Stevenson operating within Bourdieu's field of restricted production, producing a

book without mass-market appeal, but which distinguishes him within a small circle

of literary peers. Crucially, however, and unlike *An Inland Voyage*, which reveals in

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[71] 'An Apology for Idlers' was eventually published *in Cornhill Magazine* in July 1877.
[72] This work appeared first as a series in *The Portfolio* (June–December 1878).
[73] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Ethical Studies and Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*, Tusitala Edition, vol. 26 (London: Heinemann, 1924), p. 134.

its preface the author's concern that he may be the last person to read its pages, Stevenson does not express the belief that *Edinburgh* will not be widely read within the work itself, but reveals it in a private letter to his mother (published alongside the text in the 1924 Tusitala edition). In fact, the final pages of *Edinburgh* express the hope that the book will be far-reaching in its readership, imagining it read by 'Edinburgh emigrant[s], far or near, from China to Peru', who will appreciate 'a few more home pictures' of their city.[74]

This development can be traced through to the last book from this early period of Stevenson's career. Indeed, although *Travels with a Donkey* appeared in print only a year after *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson's third book contains a markedly stronger and more confident authorial presence than his first. As Daiches suggests, although *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels* 'are obviously companion pieces written with a similar end in view', the 'latter book is less coy and more self-confident than the former'.[75] This evolving confidence in his position as author is evident immediately through a comparison of the prefaces of each work. In *Travels*, Stevenson is no longer self-consciously justifying or apologising for the foreword, but uses it as an opportunity to detail a deeper purpose for the text, with a nod towards his new circle of literary friends:

> Every book is, in an intimate sense, a circular letter to the friends of him who writes it. They alone take his meaning; they find private messages, assurances of love, and expressions of gratitude dropped for them in every corner. The public is but a generous patron who defrays the postage. (p. 5)

Unlike in the preface to *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson neither advertises for readers nor laments their potential lack of interest. He affects unconcern for public opinion, as the true recipients of the text are his friends; yet he is nonetheless confident of the

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[74] Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, pp. 196–97.
[75] Daiches, *Stevenson: A Revaluation*, p. 153

public's 'generous patronage'. He is, of course, posturing, revelling in his newly established position as a 'man of letters', for whom recognition from his peers is the ultimate objective. However, having already received their validation for his first two books, he is more secure in this authorial performance than the one he attempts in *An Inland Voyage*, looking outward at his potential readers rather than self-consciously focusing on his own position in relation to the book.

Indeed, although Stevenson continues to experiment with different personae in *Travels with a Donkey*, affecting different religious identities and once again being mistaken for a pedlar, in his narration he is more assuredly *himself*, with a consistent first-person narrative running throughout. MacLachlan argues that 'there is a great deal of role-playing in Stevenson's presentation of himself in the *Travels*, which possibly reflects the author's experimentation with life itself'.[76] Indeed, undertaken after Fanny Osbourne's return to America but before Stevenson's own decision to join her, this journey through the Cévennes came at an undeniably pivotal and unpredictable point in the author's personal life. In terms of his professional identity, however, the Stevenson of *Travels with a Donkey* is more secure. At one point he is 'cross-examined about [his] journey' and its purpose:

> [T]he lady understood in a moment, and sketched out what I should put into my book when I got home. 'Whether people harvest or not in such or such a place; […] studies of manners; what, for example, I and the master of the house say to you; the beauties of Nature, and all that.' And she interrogated me with a look.
>   'It is just that,' said I. (*TDC*, 20)

Unlike the narrator in *An Inland Voyage*, this Stevenson is instantly forthcoming about the purpose of the trip. Moreover, he is not only accepted as an author just as instantly, but his literary style is shrewdly judged and determined.

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[76] MacLachlan (ed.), 'Introduction', p. xxi.

Further instances in *Travels with a Donkey* demonstrate the growth of Stevenson's authorial confidence from his first travel book to his second. When taken for a pedlar in *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson is either unable to persuade people otherwise or is content to allow them to continue in their misconceptions. In *Travels*, however, he does move from a pedlar to 'a literary man' in people's perceptions; in the following exchange with 'a mediaeval friar', he even ends by insisting emphatically on his status as an author:

> [A]s our talk ran on, and it turned out that I was not a pedlar, but a literary man, […] he changed his manner of thinking as to my reception (for I fear they respect persons even in a Trappist monastery), and told me I must be sure to ask for the Father Prior, and state my case to him in full. On second thoughts he determined to go down with me himself; he thought he could manage for me better. Might he say that I was a geographer?
>   No; I thought, in the interests of truth, he positively might not.
>   'Very well, then' (with disappointment), 'an author.' (pp. 39–40)

Thus, whilst still experimenting with his narratorial persona in many ways (perhaps, as MacLachlan states, a reflection of this turbulent moment in his personal life), there was one aspect of his identity in which Stevenson appeared now far more secure: his position as an author. As well as the inevitable confidence boost engendered by each new publication, it was his increasing understanding of the literary market, and his immersion within it, that elicited this heightened security in his professional identity. With works such as *An Inland Voyage* receiving a largely positive response from his peers, Stevenson saw the literary habitus opening up for him. He was even read as far afield as Australia, sending a copy of *An Inland Voyage* to Arthur Pratchett Martin, an admirer of his work and editor of the *Melbourne Review*, in which he appraised Stevenson's book (*Letters*, II, 270). It was at this point – following the release and reception of his first book and the

confidence it yielded – that Stevenson declared 'the spirit of other men of letters' the most 'pleasant' part of his profession (II, 283).

One important event in Stevenson's early career was his introduction to William Ernest Henley. Meeting for the first time in February 1875, the two men formed a friendship that would play a major part in both their lives. At this early moment in Stevenson's career, however, his relationship with Henley served a significant function, by according him a new role in his growing literary network. Introduced to Stevenson by Leslie Stephen while in hospital in Edinburgh, Henley was at this point an aspiring writer who had been earning a meagre living as a journalist in London for years. As Booth and Mehew suggest, 'the meeting with Stevenson brought immense benefits to Henley', as he is 'drawn into the close circle of RLS's friends' (*Letters*, I, 55). Stevenson determined to 'try to be of use' to Henley (II, 117), endeavouring to make use of the contacts he had developed over the past two years. He wrote to Grove of *Macmillan's Magazine*, recommending Henley's sonnets, which he forwarded with the letter (II, 148). He also sent the verses to Colvin, asking for his consequential opinion on the new author (II, 150). This represents an important moment in Stevenson's career: no longer was he simply the *recipient* of introductions and recommendations from his more established friends; he was now able to *invest* his own gradually accumulating 'symbolic capital' in Henley. Following Bourdieu's model, Stevenson had acquired the power to 'authorise', albeit on a small scale, the value of a cultural product, his recommendations not only bringing Henley's work to the attention of influential figures but immediately investing it with a certain worth. Stevenson even imagined himself embodying the same role Colvin played in his own career: just as he paid tribute to the impact Colvin has on his early work, Stevenson suggested that

Henley's poetry 'is not altogether without some trace of [his own] influence' (II, 150). He reassured himself with this new position, writing: 'if I cannot do good work myself, at least, it seems, I can help others better inspired; I am at least a skilful accoucheur.' (II, 152)

Notwithstanding his increasing understanding of the publishing market and his own role within it during these years, Stevenson also reveals himself as not truly comfortable in the literary environment of London. During that early, momentous visit to Cockfield where this chapter began, Stevenson wrote to his mother, expressing surprise at the marked differences he perceived in the south:

> I cannot get over my astonishment – indeed it increases every day, at the hopeless gulph that there is between England and Scotland, and English and Scotch. Nothing is the same; and I feel as strange and outlandish here, as I do in France or Germany. Everything by the wayside, in the houses, or about the people, strikes me with an unexpected unfamiliarity; I walk among surprises, for just where you think you have them, something wrong turns up. (*Letters*, I, 283).

This astonishment was not a momentary sensation from which he recovered quickly. He reiterated these sentiments nearly a decade later in 'The Foreigner at Home' in 1882, asserting that 'the first shock of English society is like a cold plunge': 'A Scotsman may tramp the better part of Europe and the United States, and never again receive so vivid an impression of foreign travel and strange lands and manners as on his first excursion into England.'[77] Even when established in an English community, as Stevenson himself became during the first years of his career, the Scot still stands 'consciously apart' from 'his compatriot in the south':

> [H]is eyes are not at home in an English landscape or with English houses; his ear continues to remark the English speech; and even though his tongue acquire the Southern knack, he will still have a strong Scots accent of the mind.[78]

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[77] Stevenson, 'The Foreigner at Home', p. 4.
[78] Stevenson, 'The Foreigner at Home', p. 11.

Indeed, despite Stevenson's apparent enjoyment of and in the Savile Club and the intellectual cachet that came with it, scholars have identified his discomfort in this London home of the literary elite. Challenging Robert Nicoll's description of Stevenson as 'the most clubbable' of men, Abrahamson quotes Edmund Gosse, who admits that, during his first years in the Club, 'very few […] were convinced of [Stevenson's] genius'. Gosse goes on to describe Stevenson's extended stay in London in 1879 as 'about the idlest and silliest part of Louis's existence', with his time spent at the Savile 'consumed in rather foolish jesting'.[79] Abrahamson suggests that such antics were part of a 'clubbable persona', a 'mask' Stevenson wore when 'negotiating in this London world', but which 'kept him from being fully understood'.[80] Such an interpretation makes sense when read next to 'The Foreigner at Home'. Here, Stevenson describes 'the grand, tree-like self-sufficiency' of the Englishman, who 'takes no interest in Scotland or the Scots', and, while they associate, 'would rather not be reminded of [the Scotsman's] baser origin'. Compared to the 'indifference' of the English, 'the vanity and curiosity of the Scot seem uneasy, vulgar and immodest'.[81] As Abrahamson states, with 'his unconventional clothes and manners and style', Stevenson may well have appeared to some 'a little "vulgar and immodest"'.[82]

While he did make a handful of lifelong friends among the members of the Savile Club, his account of his experience within a community of Englishmen in 'Foreigner at Home' is revealing. Stevenson suggests he felt himself 'a poor relation' in the eyes of many, not comfortable being himself in this unfamiliar environment,

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[79] Edmund Gosse, quoted in Robert-Louis Abrahamson, '"Of all men the most clubbable"? RLS at the Savile Club and the Cornhill Magazine', *JSS*, 8 (2011), 125–42 (p. 125).
[80] Abrahamson, 'RLS at the Savile Club', p. 127.
[81] Stevenson, 'The Foreigner at Home', p. 6.
[82] Abrahamson, 'RLS at the Savile Club', p. 126.

but ill-equipped to convincingly play the part of a staid, indifferent Englishman.[83]

John Lyon recognises this tension in Stevenson's lukewarm first meeting with Henry

James at the Savile, after which each describe the other as a variation of a *poseur*. As

Lyon notes, both men were 'literally foreigners in the world of London art' and, 'in

expressing mutual suspicion and sensing falseness each in the other', actually

acknowledged a 'difficult struggle they had in common – a struggle, involving the

adoption of roles, affectations and mannerisms, to establish their identities as

artists'.[84]

Furnas argues that, 'for Louis, the region south of Tweed' was 'principally a

dank corridor to Europe, a habitation for friends, living or dead, a cultural puzzle,

and a steady irritation'.[85] Nevertheless, even if he was not comfortable residing in

London, neither was he content to remain in Edinburgh. The ambivalence toward

Scotland that Stevenson retained throughout his career is widely acknowledged by

both critics and biographers: as Penny Fielding suggests, the author 'himself

admitted to a vexed relationship with his native country, even as it provided an

insistent source of material and inspiration for his writing'.[86] While it did later

inspire many of his texts, in the 1870s Scotland did not suit Stevenson's developing

sense of himself as an author. After his first stay in London as a member of the

Savile Club in 1874, he wrote to Sitwell from Edinburgh, commenting: 'You don't

know how I yearn today to see you all. I feel myself in the uttermost parts of the

earth, alone with ugly puppets' (*Letters*, II, 46). Stevenson evidently felt isolated

from the literary world he was trying to infiltrate, declaring that his letters must be

'being supressed', as 'Colvin never answers, Appleton never answers, or so much as

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[83] Stevenson, 'The Foreigner at Home', p. 6.
[84] John Lyon, 'Stevenson and Henry James', in *EC*, pp. 134–46 (p. 137).
[85] Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 113.
[86] Fielding, 'Introduction', p. 7.

acknowledges copy' (II, 96). Upon his return from Menton in April 1874, during which time it could be argued his writing career truly began, he observed in a letter to Sitwell: 'I cannot pretend that I am glad to be back in Edinburgh. I find I hate the place now to the backbone and only keep myself quiet by telling myself that it is not for ever.' (II, 1) Indeed, this reaction against his home town can be traced back to his first contact with the London literary market; after his hugely significant summer in Cockfield, it is hardly surprising that the following two months in Edinburgh seemed to Stevenson 'two long ugly years' (I, 345).

Recollecting memories of the author years after his death, Colvin suggested that it was the people of Edinburgh who were the cause of Stevenson's reaction against the city. According to Colvin, Stevenson 'had not been thought good enough for the polite society of his native Edinburgh', whereas in the 'new and more sympathetic company' of London 'his social genius immediately expanded and glowed'.[87] Here, Colvin seems to claim Stevenson's 'genius' as a product of his introduction to London society, rather than his Scottish birth and upbringing. This tension between the different lives of Stevenson (his Scottish heritage and his London literary success) is similarly apparent in Rosaline Masson's collected recollections of the author. Responding to Masson's call for 'memories', Lord Dunedin felt

> bound to accede to the request, if for no other reason than that my
> recollections may partially serve to dispel a sort of tradition that seems to
> have arisen, that Stevenson was looked down upon and disliked by
> Edinburgh society.[88]

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[87] Colvin, *Memories and Notes*, p. 104.
[88] Lord Dunedin, 'Reminiscences', in *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Rosaline Masson (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1925), pp. 93–97 (p. 93).

Sir Robert Russell Simpson (cousin of Walter Simpson, Stevenson's canoe partner in *An Inland Voyage*) replied similarly, explaining that he had 'exchanged friendly letters with Sir Sidney Colvin in regard to what he considered the want of appreciation of Stevenson in Edinburgh circles', keen to assure the Professor he 'was in error' about this matter.[89]

Indeed, there is certainly little evidence in his letters to suggest Stevenson's discontent with Edinburgh was owing to his treatment by its society. Rather, it is that this locality was incongruous with his developing literary identity. Applying David Lambert and Alan Lester's concept of 'life geography', which acknowledges location as 'co-constitutive with identity',[90] Edinburgh can be seen as counteractive to the professional identity Stevenson wished to embody. Jenni Calder argues that Stevenson's peripatetic writing career actually 'strengthened his identity as a Scot'.[91] Yet, while 'distance and foreign places' may have 'etched more sharply […] his own Scottishness', it did not serve to link that 'Scottishness' to his identity as a writer. Indeed, the fact that Stevenson's early career was so dependent on his movement *away* from Edinburgh, ensured that the formation of his new professional identity became inevitably disassociated from his home town. As I have explained in the first section of this chapter, Stevenson's first real professional opportunities were facilitated by travel, while his first publications were about it. Major milestones in his career took place away from home, rather than close to it. Nonetheless, Stevenson did not develop a sense of belonging in London either, despite his increased involvement in its literary scene. It is not, then, one *place* that supports this

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[89] Robert Russell Simpson, 'Reminiscences', in *I Can Remember Stevenson*, ed. by Masson, pp. 58–62 (p. 59).
[90] David Lambert and Alan Lester, *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 23.
[91] Jenni Calder, 'The Eyeball of the Dawn: Can We Trust Stevenson's Imagination?', in *Stevenson Reconsidered*, ed. by Jones, pp. 7–20 (p. 15).

new professional identity instead of another: it is the *condition of movement itself*. It is the role of a nomadic writer that Stevenson prefers to embody, for at this and many other points of his career his authorial identity is more aligned to the state of itinerancy than to any specific city or country, and so, curiously displaced. Of course, there were various practical reasons for Stevenson's peripatetic lifestyle: we have seen already that he travelled for his health, for relationships and to generate material for texts. And yet perhaps there was also a sense of displacement that spurred his perpetual peregrinations over the first five years of his career. Feeling comfortable in neither Edinburgh nor London, Stevenson found that mobility suited him best, the significance of geographical movement in the formation of his early literary identity preparing him for a lifetime as an itinerant author.

Chapter Two

The Clyde to California

> There is no foreign land; it is the traveler only that is foreign, and now and again, by a flash of recollection, lights up the contrasts of the earth. (*SS*, 229)

This declaration, made by Stevenson in *The Silverado Squatters* (1884), testifies to the influence the author's first trip outside of Europe had on his perception of the world. In 1879, Stevenson boarded a steamship to New York in pursuit of a married woman, who, less than a year later, would become his wife. Despite spanning little more than a year, this period of Stevenson's life has been seen by many commentators as a watershed moment, for both his literary career and his sense of place in a wider international community. As Stevenson's observation above intimates, the voyage across the Atlantic and subsequent journey through America had a profound impact on the author. Taking this episode as its focus, this chapter will examine Stevenson's correspondence from his time in America, as well as considering the literary works engendered by his experiences in the New World. Following the overarching focus of this thesis, it is an interest in human mobility that will link the two sections of this chapter. The first part will consider Stevenson's own mobility – how his departure to and movement through America influenced his literary production – while exploring the reactions this mobility inspired from members of his literary network. In the second part I examine Stevenson's Californian essays, which take the intense movement of people in the region as a key focus and explore how such mobility and migration shape place and identity in America.

Stevenson's life-altering journey began on 6 August 1879 in St Pancras

Station. From here, he took a night train to Glasgow, and the next day left the Clyde

for New York on the steamship the *Devonia*. He was following Fanny Osbourne,

who had returned to California and her husband a year before. There is no record of

what spurred the abrupt departure, but some have speculated that a telegram arrived

informing Stevenson of a serious decline in Fanny's health. Regardless, he did not

wait to be persuaded against the decision and purchased his passage across the

Atlantic without informing his family and against the bitter opposition of his friends.

Partly to save money and partly to collect material for a new book, Stevenson bought

a 'second cabin' ticket, the class between steerage and saloon; at two guineas more

than the six guineas 'steerage' fare, it bought Stevenson marginally better food and a

table on which to write (*Letters*, III, 1). Nevertheless, travelling with emigrants on a

ship to America brought the author into contact with conditions and characters

different from any he had previously experienced. *The Amateur Emigrant* (1895), the

travelogue that records these experiences, spelled a marked departure from his

previous picturesque works of travel, as the harsh realities he witnessed demanded a

new, starker style of writing.

Ten days after departing Scotland, the passengers of the *Devonia* arrived in

New York; a day later, Stevenson caught a train from New Jersey bound for

California. As Clare Harman explains, 'the vast, raw continent was by this date

traversable by anyone with £12 and twelve days to spare.'[1] As a third-class

passenger, conditions were hardly more favourable than aboard the ship; Stevenson

experienced at first hand many of the trials of emigration, and records this part of the

journey in 'Across the Plains' (1883). He changed to the Central Pacific railroad at

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[1] Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 174.

Ogden in Utah and, at the end of August, three weeks after leaving Britain, Stevenson arrived in Monterey, a seaside town one hundred miles south of San Francisco. Stevenson's health was sorely affected by the harsh conditions of travel, and the following six months brought further trials, including a solo camping trip in the mountains that almost killed him. Fanny moved to Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco, while Stevenson stayed in Monterey. She was not yet divorced and her husband still made regular conjugal visits, while Stevenson, now estranged from his family, was almost penniless but for the small income he made through writing, as he continued to send work back to Britain for publication. Finally, on 12 December 1879, Fanny's divorce came through and Stevenson moved to San Francisco. Money was still an obstacle, until, on hearing news that his son had suffered a haemorrhage and was acutely ill, Thomas Stevenson sent a conciliatory telegram the following April promising the pair '250 pounds annually'.[2] This guarantee, alongside the parental blessing it signified, simplified matters for the couple, and on 19 May 1880, they were married. After a month-long honeymoon, part of which was spent in the abandoned mining camp of *The Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson travelled back across the plains with his wife and stepson to New York, before crossing the Atlantic again and reaching Liverpool on 17 August 1880, one year and ten days after he left.

In her appraisal of the scholarly work on the author, Jennifer Hayward notes that 'little sustained critical attention has been paid to Stevenson's travel writing'.[3] This statement is perhaps most true in relation to his travel writing from America.

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[2] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 194.

[3] Jennifer Hayward, '"The Foreigner at Home": The Travel Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson', *JSS*, 9 (2012), 233–70 (p. 245).
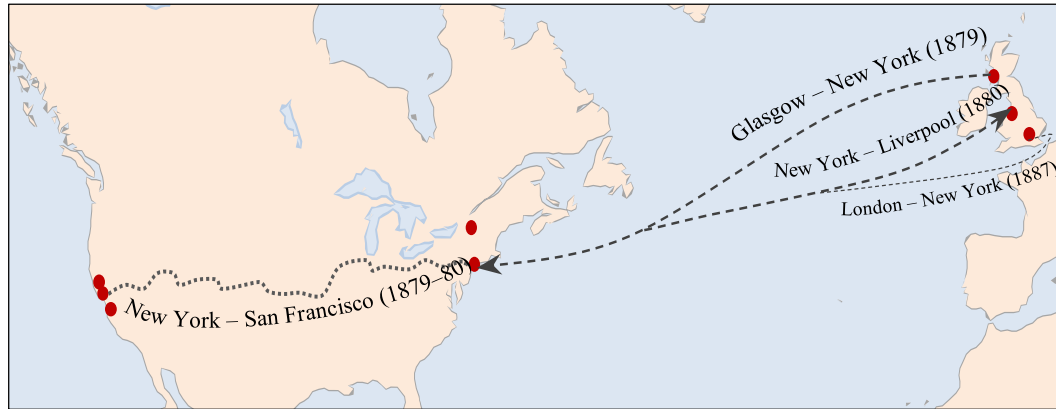
Figure 3. Map illustrating Stevenson's transatlantic and American journeys.

Even when compared to Stevenson's European and Pacific books of travel,[4] themselves overlooked in comparison to his fiction, *The Amateur Emigrant* and Californian essays have received little critical interest. The past decade, however, has seen a slight, but notable, upturn in scholarly readings of the work. Caroline McCracken-Flesher and Jennifer Hayward, in particular, have offered interesting appraisals of Stevenson's Californian writing, while Julia Reid has very recently published a new, more textually informed edition of *The Amateur Emigrant*.[5] Notwithstanding this increase in critical attention, Stevenson's American works remain some of the least considered of his *oeuvre* and are largely unknown to the wider reading public. In this chapter, I hope to contribute to the recent reassessment of the author's American travel writing: using Reid's new edition of *The Amateur Emigrant*, supplemented by elements from James D. Hart's 1966 version, I will return, as far as possible, to Stevenson's original manuscript. The first section of this chapter will examine the fractious reception and publishing history of this work,

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[4] *An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879) and *In the South Seas* (1896).

[5] Julia Reid's edition was published in 2018, a year after this chapter was first written. In the revision process I have aimed to incorporate relevant elements from the edition and to use it as my principal primary text. Reid and I are in agreement on a number of key points, including the Anglo-centric prejudice Stevenson's friends demonstrate towards his writing from the US.

demonstrating the reasoning for choosing editions that return to the manuscript as

my primary texts.

In the previous chapter, I chronicled the first years of Stevenson's career,

exploring the developments of his publishing practices and literary networks as he

moved through this early phase. With his removal to America, Stevenson's methods

and routes to publication necessarily changed again. This chapter begins with these

changes, examining the publishing histories and geographies of his writing from

America and considering how the distance and movement influenced his literary

networks. This sudden geographical relocation coincided with a marked shift in

literary style; focusing on *The Amateur Emigrant*, I consider this change and the

negative response it received from Stevenson's network in Britain. I move beyond an

analysis of style and content, however, to suggest that *where* Stevenson is writing

from features just as heavily in the initial criticism of the text as *what* and *how* he

writes. In this section I argue that national and cultural prejudices coincide with

concerns about settledness, itinerancy and identity to generate the conflict that

resulted in one of Stevenson's most radical pieces of writing not being published

until after his death.

The second part of this chapter focuses largely on Stevenson's writing from

California, conducting a spatial reading of the essays that considers the depictions of

the landscape and geographical features, as well as the newly formed cities, of the

region. Yet I also examine Stevenson's engagement with a relatively new area of

interest for cultural geographers, and an often-overlooked aspect of literary

geography: mobility. As Tim Cresswell states, mobility 'is a fundamental

geographical facet of existence and, as such, provides a rich terrain from which

narratives – and, indeed, ideologies – can be, and have been, constructed.'[6]

Stevenson's construction of the American West in his travel writing centres on the

intense mobility of the people, as the Gold Rush, developments in transport and

other aspects of increasing globalisation continue to drive human movement in the

region. Through his focus on proliferating networks of transport and migration,

Stevenson articulates the changing relationships between place, culture and identity.

Anticipating the work of cultural geographers a century later, the Californian essays

present a conception of place as fluid and open, unsettled particularly by the

dynamic forces of globalisation that were shaping the world at this time. Drawing on

concepts from cultural geography, Doreen Massey's theories of place and Tim

Cresswell's examinations of mobility in particular, I argue that it is Stevenson's

concern with the growing networks of transport and migration, and his exploration of

how such mobility changes the nature of place, that lead to the radical insights he

achieves in these essays, where he questions the significance of national identity and

nationhood in an increasingly globalised age.

'My tour across ocean and continent': *The Amateur Emigrant* and Stevenson's Transatlantic Network

As I demonstrate in the previous chapter, Stevenson's formative years as an author

were inextricably linked with travel. Yet, occurring when he was twenty-nine, the

journey across the Atlantic was the first time he had been out of Europe and made a

profound impression on the way he perceived the world. Through his writing and his

letters, we can see that Stevenson was particularly struck by the evidence of

globalisation he was confronted with on this trip; travelling 5000 miles shoulder-to-

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[6] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge 2006), p. 1.

shoulder with emigrants, he became acutely interested with the effects and causes of

migration. Although his decision to travel in the second cabin was partly based on

cost, he was also 'anxious to see the worst of emigrant life' (*AE*, 7) and document it

in a book. Driven by developments in transport and technology, the late nineteenth

century saw an increase in what we today call globalisation, which was characterised

by large-scale migrations of people, particularly from Europe to North America.

Steven Hahn asserts that '[w]ell over half of the entire population of Europe was on

the move over the course of the nineteenth century':

> somewhere between forty and fifty million of them left entirely, […] in the
> greatest numbers by far, for North America. Roughly two-thirds of them
> ended up in the United States, either permanently or temporarily – an influx
> larger than the entire U.S. population in 1860 – joining thousands of migrants
> from other parts of the world.[7]

Such international mobility is intimately connected with the wider developments

driving globalisation. As Russell King observes, globalisation 'involves the

stretching across space of both the social relations of production and the more

personal social networks of individual people and ethnic communities'.[8]

Developments in high-speed transport (such as steamships and railways) were key to

the mass movement of people, as were improvements in communication networks,

including postal services, the telegraph system and, later, the telephone. Reid

explains that 'transatlantic and transcontinental travel had changed rapidly over the

previous decades':

> The journey across the Atlantic took six weeks in the 1850s but only ten days
> in 1879. The *Devonia*, an iron single-screw steamship of 4200 tons, built in
> 1877, was one of the largest and fastest in the company's Atlantic fleet.[9]

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[7] Steven Hahn, *A Nation without Borders: The United States and its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830–1910* (New York: Viking, 2016), p. 346.
[8] Russell King, 'Migrations, Globalization and Place', in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, ed. Doreen Massey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 6–44 (p. 15).
[8] King, 'Migrations, Globalization and Place', p. 15.
[9] Reid, 'Introduction', in *AE*, pp. xxvii–lv (p. l)

It is these aspects of time–space compression that facilitated both

Stevenson's global peregrinations and his cross-continental publishing practices.[10]

As well as becoming interested in the dynamic changes of globalisation during his

trip to America, Stevenson actively participated in the process in a reciprocal way:

both witnessing it and part of it, both documenting and producing it. Read through

the work of King, Stevenson's 'social networks' and the 'social relations of [the]

production' of his texts were 'stretched across space', in this case the Atlantic.

Indeed, the routes and methods that Stevenson employs to send his writing back to

Britain (and to travel across America himself), are the same that transformed the

global book trade more generally. As David Finkelstein explains, it was the

industrial revolution of the nineteenth century that allowed Britain to become 'a

world leader in book production and dissemination':

> Steam-driven trains and boats speeded up delivery of books and print across
> national and international borders. […] The first underwater telegraph cable
> between Europe and North America was laid in 1858, running between
> Ireland and Newfoundland. These developments, along with the
> establishment of dependable postal services, enabled quick and efficient
> circulation of information between authors, editors, publishers, and their
> readers.[11]

In the US itself, an extensive railway network was built over the course of the

nineteenth century, with 166,703 miles of track in operation by 1890.[12] These

integrated systems of post, rail and telegraph facilitated a national book trade in

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[10] 'Time–space compression' refers to the combined effects of all phenomena that condense or elide spatial and temporal differences, such as high-speed transport or communication technology. The concept was first articulated by the Marxist geographer David Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990).
[11] David Finkelstein, 'The Globalization of the Book: 1800-1970', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. by Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 329–40 (p. 329, 330).
[12] John Barnes, Bill Bell, Rimi B. Chatterjee, Wallace Kirsop, and Michael Winship, 'A Place in the World', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. by David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 595–634 (p. 610).

America, but also improved trans-continental and international connections. By the time Stevenson reached the shores of the New World in 1879, Britain and America had begun to operate within what we can recognise today as a modern information society.[13]

These routes, carved out by global trade (and as they relate to the book trade more specifically), enabled Stevenson's itinerant and international publishing practices. Having reached California, the author continued to send manuscripts back to his literary contacts in Britain for publication. Despite the technological developments detailed above, letters still took at least nineteen days to travel from California to the UK. Fewer of Stevenson's letters have survived from this period than at any other time: Booth and Mehew speculate that 'Mrs Stevenson, who was usually so meticulous about preserving her son's letters, must have deliberately destroyed all those from this period of family dissension and distress' (*Letters*, III, 1). As noted above, Stevenson did not include his parents in his decision to follow Fanny to America; as strict Covenanters, they did not approve of his attachment to a married woman ten years his senior. Nor were his friends enamoured with Fanny: Claire Harman notes the 'puzzling degree of animosity that his friends displayed later towards his wife'.[14] Even before the marriage Colvin and Henley expressed deep reservations about the match and thoroughly opposed the American journey. Writing to Charles Baxter, Henley recorded his fear that Stevenson would be 'induced to go to Monterey, and there get mixed up once more in the miserable life of alarms and intrigues that he led in Paris', where he frequently stayed with Fanny the year before (*Letters*, III, 5).

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[13] Barnes et al., 'A Place in the World', p. 596.
[14] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 175.

The negativity from Stevenson's family and friends towards both his wife-to-be and his journey to her is mirrored in their reactions to his first pieces of writing from America. It is in no small part due to this that the reception and publishing history of *The Amateur Emigrant* is particularly fraught. Drawing from notes made aboard the ship, Stevenson wrote the first half of the work in California and sent the manuscript to Colvin in London in December 1879; this section of the travelogue was badly received. While the second part of the text, 'Across the Plains', was published in abridged form in *Longman's Magazine* in 1883, the record of Stevenson's journey on the emigrant ship was so disapproved of it did not appear in print until 1896, when it was included in the posthumous Edinburgh Edition of his collected *Works*. Even this version was carefully edited, with about a third of the original account excised. It was not until 1966 that the text as Stevenson originally wrote it was published, as far as was possible. James D. Hart's edition restored the passages from the (incomplete) manuscript that had been removed in the Edinburgh Edition. Hart claims the excised sections were not only 'every bit as finished as the parts deemed publishable but also […] integral to the understanding of the situation as Stevenson saw it and to the work as a whole.'[15] In her 2018 edition of *The Amateur Emigrant*, Reid takes the manuscript (which had been set in type in 1880 before being withdrawn from the publisher) as her principal copy text. Whereas Hart follows the Edinburgh Edition, supplementing it with the removed manuscript passages, Reid starts with the manuscript and supplements it where the pages are missing with the earliest printed version. For the second part of the text, this is not the Edinburgh Edition but the 'Across the Plains' essay from *Longman's Magazine*. As it is the most up-to-date and textually informed edition, I will be using Reid's as

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[15] Hart (ed.), 'Introduction', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, pp. xiii–li (p. xxxviii).

my primary text. Hart's edition remains useful, however, as it makes explicit the sections of the manuscript removed from the Edinburgh Edition. I will therefore use both editions in my analysis of Stevenson's response to emigration and the portrayal of his fellow passengers, while examining in detail the passages that were removed at the insistence of external agents.

Hart sees the bowdlerisation of *The Amateur Emigrant* as indicative of a wider effort on the part of Stevenson's family and friends 'to present a different image' of the author after his death, concocting 'what Henley called "this seraph in Chocolate, this barley-sugar effigy of a real man"'.[16] Hart argues that it was an urge to conceal 'some of the rougher, more realistic aspects'[17] of Stevenson's writing that led them to insist '*The Amateur Emigrant* be pruned, either by the author or by others'.[18] Sue Zlosnik agrees, suggesting that 'the edited passages were presumably considered too strong for the reading public'. Indeed, this contention that it was the 'realist concern for physical detail' that so disturbed the mediating readers of the text is widely accepted.[19] Yet this chapter will suggest that, at least in the case of the manuscript sent to Britain in 1879, the detractors were responding just as much to the location in which it was written as to its content and style. Through a close analysis of the language in Stevenson's correspondence, I demonstrate just how intimately connected the initial criticism of *The Amateur Emigrant* was to its provenance in America. My ultimate intention is to look beyond the cultural or national elitism it reveals, in order to suggest it was the threat that Stevenson's itinerancy itself posed to the professional identities of the literary men of London

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[16] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxxviii.
[17] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxxvii.
[18] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxxviii.
[19] Sue Zlosnik, '"Home is the sailor, home from sea": Robert Louis Stevenson and the End of Wandering', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 34 (2004), 240–52 (p. 248).

that underpinned such disproportionate critique, as his global peregrinations

challenged what it meant to be a 'man of letters' in nineteenth-century Britain.

My first chapter tracked Stevenson's progress through his early years of

professional authorship, demonstrating his initial reliance on Sidney Colvin before

his growing knowledge, confidence and connections in the literary industry enabled

him to secure many of his own publishing deals himself. Once in America, with the

vastness of the Atlantic separating him from the literary world of London, he once

again became reliant on a few core members of his network. While he continued to

send short 'bright papers' to Leslie Stephen for inclusion in the *Cornhill Magazine*

(*Letters*, III, 49),[20] his more substantial works of fiction or travel writing were first

dispatched to mediating agents. Having written 'The Story of a Lie' during the

crossing to New York, Stevenson sent it to Colvin with instructions he was to 'deal

absolutely with' it, assigning him significant authority in declaring: 'I shall hold

myself bound by your signature' (III, 6).[21] As well as sending back work to be

placed, he enlisted Colvin to find out what sort of writing would be welcomed by

British publications. He enquired on behalf of himself and his new family

connections in America; Joe Strong was an artist married to Fanny's only daughter,

Belle:

> Soon you will receive some sketches by Joe Strong. I send them to you in a
> future view: see if the *Graphic* or *Illustrated London* or some of these things
> would have them and ask whether any of them would take a thing from me
> about a camp in the Redwoods, bear-hunters and sich [sic], freely illustrated
> by Strong. At the same time, see if my tour across ocean and continent, *en*
> *amateur emigrant* would not do for *Pall Mall*. (III, 11)

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[20] The *Cornhill Magazine* published 'Yoshida Torajiro' in March 1880 and 'Henry David Thoreau:
His Character and Opinions' in June.
[21] 'The Story of a Lie' was published in *New Quarterly Magazine* in October 1879.

Stevenson went on to send Colvin the first part of *The Amateur Emigrant* in early

December 1879 and, notwithstanding their animated criticism of the work, both he

and Henley 'proceeded vigorously in their efforts to find a publisher for it'.[22] The

text was accepted a few months later, first by Donald Macleod for *Good Words*

magazine and later Kegan Paul,[23] although it was ultimately published by neither, as

I will discuss later in the chapter.

W. E. Henley played a similarly vital role in the network that enabled

Stevenson's cross-continental publishing. By the time Stevenson left for America,

Henley, whom Stevenson had assisted in gaining a foothold in the literary world of

London, had been an editor of the short-lived magazine *London* (1877–79), and

would shortly come into his own as editor of *The Magazine of Art* (1881–86). As

Booth and Mehew affirm, Henley effectively acted as an unpaid literary agent for

Stevenson, performing administrative duties and negotiating with publishers to get

him the best deal, both during his year in America and while he recovered from the

journey in Davos, Switzerland, the following winter (*Letters*, III, 58). In November

1879 Stevenson sent Henley 'The Pavilion on the Links', entreating him to

'acknowledge the "Pavilion" by return': 'I shall be so nervous till I hear; as of course

I have no copy except of one or two places where the vein would not run. God

prosper it, poor "Pavilion"!' (III, 27) Stevenson was well versed in the perils of

posting manuscripts: in 1875 he had lamented there being 'one masterpiece fewer in

the world' (II, 143), after Colvin lost an essay Stevenson had sent him in his rooms

in Cambridge. As well as obtaining publication for 'The Pavilion on the Links' in the

Cornhill for September 1880, Henley secured for Stevenson one of his most

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[22] Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 43.
[23] Swearingen, *Prose Writings,* p. 43.

important (and most lucrative) publishing connections of this point in his career (III,

49). Chatto and Windus paid £100 for *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882)

and £50 for *New Arabian Nights* (1882) – this latter sum, as Henley pointed out to

Baxter, as much 'as Louis got for the *Donkey* and the *Voyage* put together'.[24]

Stevenson acknowledged his friend's invaluable support during this overseas phase

of his career, writing to him in April 1882:

> I remember I have never formally thanked you; for that 100 quid, nor in
> general for the introduction to Shatter your Windows [i.e. Chatto and
> Windus], and continue to bury you in copy as if you were my private
> secretary. Well, I am not unconscious of it all. (*Letters*, III, 321)

Despite this return to a heavier reliance on his friends in navigating the

British literary industry, Stevenson's increased confidence is evidenced in the terms

on which he requires publishing deals to be made. Upon sending 'The Story of a Lie'

to be published in Kegan Paul's *New Quarterly*, he suggests that Colvin 'keep it

back', unless he can 'get the distinct impression out of Paul that the £50 is only for

the appearance of the story in the magazine, and the copyright to remain in [the

author's] hand' (*Letters*, III, 5). Similarly, when discussing the book publication of

The Amateur Emigrant in late 1879 he implores Colvin to 'remember' that, at all

costs, he 'must keep a royalty' (III, 29). Having accumulated a small amount of

symbolic capital,[25] as the author of three books and multiple essays and stories,

Stevenson now asserted the value of his work by dictating terms in the contracts. Of

course, his insistence on more commercially sustainable deals is also indicative of

his changed financial circumstances. By travelling to America without informing his

parents and against their wishes, Stevenson, for the first time, became solely reliant

on writing for his income. He felt painfully the pressure to earn money, particularly

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[24] W. E. Henley to Charles Baxter in *Letters*, III, 322.
[25] Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 77.

as he hoped 'to soon have a greater burthen to support' (III, 21) in the form of Fanny

and her family. After fewer than three months of living in America, Stevenson

confided in Henley that he was 'terribly frightened about [his] work which seems to

advance too slowly' (III, 21). Not only did his lack of income slow Fanny's divorce

proceedings, but Stevenson felt it restricted the geographic mobility he had come to

depend on. He writes to Colvin in December 1879: 'I hate myself for being always

on business. But I cannot help my fears and anxieties about money; even if all came

well it would be many a long day before we could afford to leave this coast.' (III, 34)

Such money concerns were alleviated in April 1880, when Stevenson's father

telegrammed assuring the author he could 'count on £250 annually'.[26] Up until this

point his financial situation seemed bleak: with recurring ill-health, he simply could

not produce work fast enough to sustain the living he required. One avenue

Stevenson explored to supplement his income from British publications was to

capitalise on the literary market in America. In December he excitedly informed

Colvin that he had been hired as a 'reporter for the *Monterey Californian* at a salary

of $2 a week!' (*Letters*, III, 31) Anne Fisher, however, who knew Stevenson during

his stay in Monterey, claimed 'the $2 was contributed by friends in Simoneau's

restaurant as a means of helping [him] without hurting his pride' (III, 31). Yet

Stevenson did engage in more productive networking during his time in America. As

early as October 1879, he wrote to Colvin: 'I am told if I had a proper introduction to

the *Atlantic*, they would give from 20 to 40 pounds for a piece of my trash. I wonder

how I should go about that.' (III, 19) It was not until June of the following year,

however, that Stevenson used his connection with Leslie Stephen to introduce

himself to William Dean Howells, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1871 to 1881.

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[26] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 194.

From Calistoga, California, he sent Howells three poems, one of which was

published in October 1880 (III, 85).

More significant, however, is Stevenson's recognition of the potential of the

American literary market: shortly after arriving in America, he wrote to P. G.

Hamerton: 'Could your recommendation introduce me to an American publisher?

My next book I should really try to get hold of here' (*Letters*, III, 20). Hamerton

wrote a letter of recommendation to Roberts Brothers of Boston, who did indeed

become Stevenson's first American publishers, issuing *Travels with a Donkey*, *An

Inland Voyage, Treasure Island*, *Prince Otto* and *Silverado Squatters* for the US

market between 1879 and 1894 (III, 299). Yet it was not until 1885 that Stevenson

embarked in earnest on transatlantic publishing, when his friend, the artist Will Low,

introduced him to Charles Scribner's Sons (*Letters*, V, 86). That year, the firm

published *A Child's Garden of Verses* for the American market at the same time as

Longmans in Britain, as well as *Kidnapped* the year after in 1886, becoming

Stevenson's preferred publishers by the time he reached the Pacific in 1889. As I

will examine in more detail in Chapter Four, he serialised his first novel from the

region (*The Wrecker*) solely with *Scribner's Magazine*, before publishing it in book

form for British readers with Cassell and Co.

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The voyage across the Atlantic in the summer of 1879 can be read as journey of

multiple transitions for Stevenson. As well as his first experience outside of Europe,

the trip furnished him with a ready-made family: a wife and two children, one still

very much a dependent. Yet it was also the first major journey the author had taken

with a real purpose. As Hart asserts, Stevenson's two most important works of travel

up to this point were born out of 'pleasure trips, undertaken in part simply to provide

material for the books'.[27] Unlike *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*, *The Amateur Emigrant* records a journey of hardship and necessity (to Stevenson's mind at least), as he travels over 5000 miles to reach the woman he wishes to marry. Richard Ambrosini observes that the text 'marks a dramatic break from his earlier walking-tour essays and travel books set in Belgium and France, with their painterly renditions of landscapes seen through the eyes of a carefree vacationer'.[28] Indeed, another significant transition for Stevenson is the environment and people about which he wrote. The conditions he witnessed and the lives of the people with whom he spoke were unlike any he had experienced before; as Harman contends, 'this first real contact with everyday working-class squalor' revealed Stevenson's past 'attempts at being mistaken for a tramp […] for what they really were: middle-class slumming.'[29] This new experience of travel demanded a different style: the light and charming writing of his previous books became wholly inappropriate, as 'the more [he] saw of [his] fellow-passengers, the less [he] was tempted to the lyric note' (*AE*, 13).

As he was a second-cabin passenger essentially travelling in steerage, almost all Stevenson's 'fellow passengers' were emigrants. And it was his perception of emigration that became the first of many romantic ideas of the New World to be dismantled during his journey. As Jennifer Hayward explains, 'Stevenson's expectation that America would be "a kind of paradise" was produced by popular representations of the New World'.[30] Emigrant manuals were one form in which British citizens were introduced to the potential prosperity available to those willing

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[27] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxxvi.
[28] Richard Ambrosini, 'The Four Boundary-Crossings of R. L. Stevenson, Novelist and Anthropologist', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 23–35 (p. 28).
[29] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 194.
[30] Hayward, 'Foreigner at Home', p. 240.

to uproot their lives to America. Hayward states that, from the 1870s, emigrant

manuals became 'popular as they provided practical information for prospective

settlers'. Yet such practical advice was imparted alongside exaggerated claims of the

economic opportunities the US offered: Bronson Keeler's emigrant manual was

entitled *Where to Go to Become Rich: Farmers', Miners' and Tourists' Guide to*

Kansas, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado (1880).[31] Fictional accounts also

contributed heavily to the myths and romance surrounding emigration. In her survey

of ten bestselling magazines among working- and middle-class readers between

1879 and 1914, Amy J. Lloyd concludes that 'emigration was not only frequently

portrayed, but was also often depicted in a specific fashion, with emigration tales

being largely stories about men venturing to the wilder, more undeveloped regions of

the New World, where they make fortunes and encounter adventure.' Notably, while

'the United States rivalled Australia as the most popular destination for emigrant

characters', the urban northeast of the country – 'a place with which many Britons

would have been familiar and the most popular destination among actual emigrants

during this period – seems to have been used by authors as a place (temporarily) to

dispose of characters for melodramatic purposes', and was 'generally not described

in much detail'.[32] By contrast, stories that depict characters emigrating to the western

United States in search of fortune and adventure offered much fuller and more

colourful portrayals of these characters' experiences and had become increasingly

popular by the 1880s. Lloyd explains that

> most of these stories portray emigration in a predominately positive light. In
> particular, many place a firm emphasis on emigration's economic attractions.

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[31] Hayward, 'Foreigner at Home', p. 240.

[32] Amy J. Lloyd, 'For Fortune and Adventure: Representations of Emigration in British Popular Fiction, 1870–1914', in *Victorian Settler Narratives: Emigrants, Cosmopolitans and Returnees in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Tamara S. Wagner (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), pp. 87–98 (pp. 87, 91).

Many characters travel overseas with the primary goal of making money – preferably a fortune; many also hope to return to Britain after accomplishing this goal. While there are occasional stories of suffering and woe and while many characters do meet with some initial hardships and difficulties, most end up finding success – both spectacular and more moderate – and many do make the return trip to Britain. Thus, the New World is generally portrayed as a place rich in resources and opportunities – a place where Britons could (temporarily) venture to achieve better lives and even great riches. [33]

This representation of migrant life in America was undoubtedly appealing to many British readers, while the prevalence of emigration in popular fiction served to normalise the practice of moving overseas. In her analysis of questionnaires completed by British emigrants to Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Marjory Harper argues that many people embarked on the journey with highly unrealistic expectations of what awaited them, shaped largely by popular fiction. She suggests that the responses reveal an adherence to multiple stereotypes 'of the West derived from guidebooks, juvenile fiction and penny dreadfuls', which were necessarily discarded when 'golden wheatfields did not materialise without effort and […] the prairies were not peopled by befeathered warlike savages and heroic cowboys'.[34] Literature in the nineteenth century transmitted and normalised the image of the young, male emigrant seeking adventure, as well as the notion that fortunes could be made and lives improved by leaving Britain for the colonies. Indeed, Tamara Wagner observes that 'since early colonial settler writers continued to keep readerships "back home" in mind, […] they likewise tended to play into, rather than dismantle, readers' expectations'.[35] The pull of such romantic ideas of emigration is summarised by Walter Besant in *Good Words* in 1893, when he writes:

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[33] Lloyd, 'Fortune and Adventure', pp. 95–96.

[34] Marjory Harper, 'Probing the Pioneer Questionnaires: British Settlement in Saskatchewan, 1887–1914', *Saskatchewan History*, 52 (2000), 28–46 (pp. 30, 38).

[35] Tamara S. Wagner, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Settler Narratives*, pp. 1–22 (p. 5).

To the stayer at home the lot of the young man who goes out to the colonies or to foreign parts appears exciting and adventurous. The very name of the Rocky Mountains, or California, or China, or New Zealand, or Australia suggests adventure, peril, and continual calls for courage, coolness, presence of mind, bravery, and endurance.[36]

In the *Amateur Emigrant*, however, Stevenson actively undermines this narrative of emigration, as well as the image of the typical emigrant traveller. As he surveys the assortment of people on board the ship, he acknowledges the prevailing cultural imagination about moving to a new life overseas, but claims now 'for the first time to understand the nature of emigration': 'There is nothing more agreeable to picture and nothing more pathetic to behold. The abstract idea, as conceived at home, is hopeful and adventurous. A young man, you fancy, scorning restraints and helpers, issues forth into life' (*AE*, 13). The 'you' Stevenson addresses is presumably his middle-class reader and the 'home', where 'the abstract idea' is conceived, is the polite society of his peers. After less than a day out of this world, however, Stevenson finds the image 'to consist mostly of embellishments'. Not only did he find that 'few of the men were below thirty', but the idea that hope and adventure spurred their departure became utterly untenable. In the nineteenth century, emigrants from Europe came increasingly from industrial areas and were often the urban poor escaping dire working and living conditions.[37] Surrounded by the casualties of an industrial society, Stevenson notes:

> Labouring mankind had in the last years, and throughout Great Britain, sustained a prolonged and crushing series of defeats. I had heard vaguely of these reverses; of whole streets of houses standing deserted by the Tyne […]; of homeless men loitering at the street-corners of Glasgow with their chests beside them; of closed factories, useless strikes, and starving girls. But I had never taken them home to me or represented these distresses livingly to my imagination. (*AE*, 14)

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[36] Walter Besant, 'All in a Garden Fair', *Good Words* (July 1893), pp. 405–18 (p. 410).
[37] King, 'Migrations, Globalization and Place', p. 16.

As Hayward suggests, 'Stevenson locates industrial decay very close to home', with specific references to the River Tyne and Glasgow.[38] Yet it is only on board the ship that 'these distresses' truly come alive for him, his sudden exposure to the realities of working-class life shattering his preconceived commitment to the romance of emigration.

Commenting on the impact of industrialisation on the movement of people, Russell King explains that the dramatic economic growth of the nineteenth century 'was sustained by using emigration as an "escape hatch". The exodus of 50 million people allowed the European economies to create [...] record growth, without having that growth swallowed up by population increase.'[39] Stevenson recognises the Social Darwinism driving this surge in emigration: he describes the passengers as 'a company of the rejected', a surplus population, forced from the unliveable conditions of their own land, 'now fleeing pitifully to another' (*AE*, 14). Of course, Stevenson was no revolutionary; as Lawrence Phillips states, he immediately 'removes the sting from this social comment' by labelling the steerage passengers 'the drunken, the incompetent, [and] the weak'. Phillips argues that Stevenson offers a 'scathing interpretation of the characters of the steerage passengers, insisting they are congenital failures rather than economic and class victims'.[40] Yet, in light of its exploration of the economic challenges facing the working class, *The Amateur Emigrant*'s position on social divisions is not quite so clear-cut as Phillips suggests. As I will explore later in this chapter, Stevenson negotiates his liminal social station aboard the ship in complex and challenging ways. Whether inflected with

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[38] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 245.
[39] King, 'Migrations, Globalization and Place', p. 16.
[40] Lawrence Phillips, 'Robert Louis Stevenson: Class and "Race" in *The Amateur Emigrant*', in *Race and Class* (2005), 46.3, 39–54 (p. 43).

conservative or progressive views, such social commentary spells a marked

departure from the picturesque descriptions of his past two travelogues.

Considering his response to the nature of emigration, it must have been

immediately clear to Stevenson that the style of this travel book would be different

to his previous works. As well as scrutinising the harsh conditions in Britain from

which the *Devonia*'s passengers were fleeing, *The Amateur Emigrant* lingers on the

squalid surroundings they must endure on the ship. Reid proposes that this angle was

not unique in itself: '"Slumming" narratives were, indeed, increasingly popular

during this period', while 'an exposé of conditions aboard a transatlantic steamer,

"In the Steerage of a Cunard Steamer", ran in the *Pall Mall Gazette* during

Stevenson's crossing'.[41] Yet, as noted above, such exposés vied for space within a

literary market replete with romantic and adventurous tales of emigration.

Additionally, Stevenson's travelogue was neither intended nor marketed as a

journalistic exposé. Indeed, readers familiar with his earlier works of travel would

have been surprised at the dramatic shift from picturesque portrayals of rural

characters and landscapes. Even after reading the initial manuscript, however, many

of Stevenson's literary contacts refused to acknowledge or accept the clear

distinctions between this new work and his previous travel books. Hart explains that,

'at the suggestion of his friends, *The Athenaeum* of Feb. 7, 1880, […] announced

that Stevenson was preparing "a third set of his charming *impressions de voyage*"',

instructing readers to expect more of the same from this latest book of travel.[42]

Instead, *The Amateur Emigrant* depicts the appalling conditions on board the ship in

a stark and uncompromising style:

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[41] Reid, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.
[42] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxxviii.

> Even by day much of the steerage enjoyed but a groping twilight. […] in a place so full of corners and so much broken up by fixtures and partitions, dirt might lie for years without disturbance. The pens, stalls, pews – I know not what to call them – were besides, by their very design, beyond the reach of the bucket and swab. Each broad shelf […] formed a fourfold asylum for all manner of uncleanness. (p. 22)

The passengers were reduced to 'human animals', living in 'pens' where the 'merest possibilities of health or cleanliness were absent' (pp. 22–23). Stowed away like livestock, distinctions between individuals are quickly eroded and, 'long ere the ten days were out or the shores of America in sight, all were reduced to a common level, all, who here stewed together in their own exhalations, were uncompromisingly unclean' (p. 23). Emerging from these realities of emigration, it is hard to see how *The Amateur Emigrant* could have ever become the third in a triptych of picturesque travel books.

Stevenson himself was under no such illusions regarding the differences between this book and his previous work. Upon sending Colvin the account of his ocean voyage in early December 1879, he wrote: 'It is not a monument of eloquence; indeed I have sought to be prosaic in view of the nature of the subject, but I think it is interesting' (*Letters*, III, 29). As the last statement suggests, Stevenson did not see the more 'prosaic' style of the text as a failing. Indeed, Wendy R. Katz asserts that the author 'was convinced of the quality of *The Amateur Emigrant*', citing a letter to Colvin in mid-April 1880 in which Stevenson states: '"I shall always think it my best work"'.[43] Katz takes this quotation slightly out of context, however, as, in his letter to Colvin, Stevenson is in fact marvelling at the achievement of writing anything at all during his sickness of this period, declaring his partiality for the work based on

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[43] Wendy R. Katz, 'Whitman and Thoreau as Literary Stowaways in Stevenson's American Writings', in *Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Ambrosini and Dury, pp. 327–37 (p. 328).

the 'courage and suffering [that] is buried in that MS' (*Letters*, III, 75), rather than

its literary quality. Nevertheless, he does, on multiple other occasions, assert his

confidence in the travel book. In October 1879, Stevenson informs Colvin that it is

'half drafted', declaring: 'I believe it will be more popular than any of my others; the

canvas is so much more popular and larger too' (III, 15). In the letter to Colvin that

includes the first draft, Stevenson pronounces *The Amateur Emigrant* 'a *clever*

book', 'the book of a man that is who has paid a great deal of attention to

contemporary life, and not through the newspapers' (III, 30). Indeed, it is

Stevenson's new 'attention' to the concerns of an increasingly industrial and

globalised society that emerges through the dramatic stylistic shift from his earlier

works. As McCracken-Flesher notes, 'the failure of literary effect' in *The Amateur*

Emigrant 'betokens an access of human sympathy that Stevenson had not yet

experienced in his travels', his new interest in 'the ordinary, the unaesthetic' and 'the

real' echoed in the unflinching frankness of the language.[44]

Yet if Stevenson was satisfied with the change in both content and style of

his latest travel account, as I have already noted, his friends were most emphatically

not. The author sent Colvin his account of the emigrant ship 'not only for placement

with a magazine or book publisher, but also with marginal inquiries asking for the

verification of a quotation or whether a particular technical word had been properly

employed.'[45] As Hart explains, Colvin felt himself 'free to comment upon and to do

some editing of the text, but went beyond that into general disparagement'.[46] In a

letter to Stevenson he declared the account a '"spiritless record of squalid

experiences," little likely to advance a "still only half-established reputation"'.[47] In a

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[44] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', in *EC*, pp. 86–101 (p. 97).
[45] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.
[46] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.
[47] Sidney Colvin quoted in Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.

later letter of February 1880, Henley echoes these sentiments, writing: '*The*

Emigrant is feeble, dull, pretentious; and if you saw it now, you'd writhe and cower

over it' (*Letters*, III, 40). This criticism of the text was not only directed to

Stevenson but circulated throughout his close network of friends and literary

contacts. Writing to Baxter in December 1879, Colvin confides: 'the works he has

sent me from out there are *not good*. I doubt whether they are saleable, and if so,

whether they would do anything but harm to his reputation' (III, 40). Whilst also

referring to 'The Story of a Lie' and 'The Pavilion on the Links',[48] it is the 'account

of [the] voyage in the Emigrant Ship' that Colvin singles out as Stevenson's

particular failure, declaring it 'quite unworthy of him' (III, 40). In strikingly similar

language, Thomas Stevenson told his son over a year after his return home: 'I think

[*The Amateur Emigrant*] not only the worst thing you have done, but altogether

unworthy of you' (III, 167). The echo of Colvin's critique here perhaps indicates the

enduring significance of his first negative response to the text: indeed, there is

evidence of correspondence between Thomas and Colvin at the time Stevenson first

sent the manuscript of *The Amateur Emigrant* to Britain (III, 23, 42) and Christopher

MacLachlan argues that the author's father was 'convinced by Colvin that [the work]

would damage his son's reputation'.[49] Whether or not he was directly influenced by

Colvin, Thomas Stevenson's intense disapproval dealt the final blow to *The Amateur*

Emigrant this time, as the author allowed his father to pay £100 to withdraw the

work from Kegan Paul and gave up hope of publishing it elsewhere.[50]

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[48] 'The Story of a Lie' was published in the *New Quarterly Magazine* for October 1879, while 'The Pavilion on the Links' appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* in September and October 1880.
[49] MacLachlan, 'Introduction', p. xxxiii.
[50] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xli.

At the point when it was withdrawn from Kegan Paul in the autumn of 1880, *The Amateur Emigrant* was almost in the press.[51] The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale holds the surviving (but incomplete) galley sheets, together with comments and suggested deletions by Colvin and Kegan Paul, alongside revisions by Stevenson (*Letters*, III, 83). This edition was to include both parts of the American journey, the sea voyage and the trip 'Across the Plains'. Whilst he was still in California, Stevenson requested that Colvin 'recover the sheets of the *Emigrant*' and post them to him, where he worked on revising and deleting the offending passages (III, 75).[52] In response to Colvin's heavy criticisms, about a third of the first part of the text ('From Clyde to Sandy Hook') had been excised by the time it was to be published, but even these heavy revisions did not satisfy Thomas Stevenson. While 'Across the Plains' was published (with revisions) in *Longman's Magazine* in 1883, the work as a whole, with the two parts appearing consecutively, was not published until 1895, after the author's death, and again in bowdlerized form. Hart suggests that 'the rougher passages [that] were deleted' from the posthumous Edinburgh Edition were 'presumably' done so 'by Colvin', the editor.[53] This assumption was corrected by Roger Swearingen twenty years later, who claimed that the text was 'abridged by Stevenson himself in 1894', after Colvin wrote to him suggesting its inclusion in the Edinburgh Edition, while recommending more revisions.[54] Stevenson, who was by this time living in Samoa, received and worked on the old proofs, sending them back 'well slashed' (*Letters*, VIII, 287). Swearingen states: 'Although Stevenson did not live to see this volume through the press, Colvin made no additional changes and the work as published in the

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[51] MacLachlan, 'Introduction', p. xxxiii.
[52] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xli.
[53] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxxviii.
[54] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 45.

Edinburgh Edition represents Stevenson's final revision of it made in spring of 1894.'[55]

Yet, whilst this version may represent the last iteration Stevenson saw, there is no doubt that it differs considerably from the text he originally wrote, and that the passages changed and deleted are those that were first objected to by his friends and colleagues. The long and descriptive extract about the squalor of the steerage quarters, the 'asylum for all manner of uncleanness' (*AE*, 22), is entirely excised. Similarly erased are two instances where Stevenson lingers on the unsavoury effects of sickness aboard the ship. Recounting his discovery of a miserably ill steerage passenger on the deck of the *Devonia*, Stevenson recalls that 'he had been sick and his head was in his vomit' (p. 41). This sentence, as well as a reference to Stevenson leaning his own knee 'in the vomit' (p. 43), does not appear in the Edinburgh Edition, and both have been highlighted for removal in Colvin and Kegan Paul's notes on the 1880 galley proofs. Yet it is not only these depictions of bodily functions that were removed from the published text. In his original version, Stevenson notes how the patient, despite being overcome with sickness, offered him 'a coloured handkerchief […], saying "Wipe your knee wi' that"' (p. 43). Within the narrative persona he adopts, Stevenson recognises this act as 'the unaffected courtliness of a good heart', arguing many 'would be shorn of all romantic notions by having been dog-sick' (p. 43). The record of the man's courteous action, however, is not included in the Edinburgh Edition; in the galley sheets from 1880 the entire passage has been stuck out, and a note left by 'S.C' alongside it insisting: 'Must come out at all costs'.[56]

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[55] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 45.
[56] Julia Reid (ed.), 'Essay on the Text', in *AE*, pp. 131–60 (p. 136).

Interestingly, five pages later a further reference to the unwell passenger is again deleted: 'I have never met a finer gentleman. He had the essentials of that business, in all sense of the expression, by heart' (p. 47).[57] Hart's edition, which places in brackets the parts of the manuscript that were removed from the Edinburgh Edition, reveals that these two sentences have been excised amidst long paragraphs that remain uncensored. While it is unclear who made the final decision on this removal, it appears it is the insistence on the steerage passenger's refined or 'gentlemanly' qualities that is considered unsuitable: on the next page, just four words referring to the man that are cut, mid-sentence, from within a block of text that remains: 'he was a gentleman' (p. 48).[58] Reid suggests that 'both Kegan Paul and Colvin object to the portrayal of a steerage passenger's physical sufferings and the emphasis on the man's essential dignity'.[59] While this certainly seems accurate, I would go further to argue that that this last excision of only four words implies a specific desire on the part of Stevenson's proof-readers here to police the term and concept of the 'gentleman' as it occurs in *The Amateur Emigrant.*

This depiction of a working-class passenger is not unique in the text, as stereotypical or indiscriminate perceptions of the emigrants are frequently undermined. The opening lines of the chapter 'Steerage Types' assert that

> the type of man in our steerage was by no means one to be despised. Some were handy, some intellectual, and almost all were pleasantly and kindly disposed. I had many long and serious talks […] and I thought they formed, upon the whole, an agreeable and well informed society. (p. 28)

Again, however, this passage is not included in the first published edition. Lawrence Phillips notes that aspects of *The Amateur Emigrant* took Stevenson 'some way

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[57] Also see Hart, 'Amateur Emigrant', p. 54 for a clear indication of how these sentences were removed from the Edinburgh Edition.
[58] Also see Hart, 'Amateur Emigrant', p. 55.
[59] Reid, 'Essay on the Text', p. 136.

beyond the conventional political and social sensibilities of his established readership'.[60] Perhaps, appearing alongside the critique of industrial capitalism and its disproportionate victimisation of the working classes, such sentiments were felt to strike a discordant and unwelcome note in the ears of its readers. Yet, as many scholars have commented, even the original text's treatment of class is not straightforward. Stevenson occupies a liminal position aboard the ship, living and in many ways identifying with working-class passengers, while remaining distinctly an *amateur* emigrant. The very pursuit of writing and observing sets him apart from his neighbours; as Harman notes, 'he was a class-imposter, travelling rough to make a book of its novelty, a fact which would have offended many of his fellow passengers had it been widely known.'[61] Phillips terms Stevenson's narrative persona in this text 'politically conservative', pointing to the 'alarm'[62] he evinces when the same unwell passenger as above insists that 'capital, by some happy direction, must change hands' and the country be remodelled by 'civil discord' and 'with the hand of violence' (p. 48). According to Harman, Stevenson's shock suggests he 'imagined that the well-off working class were all Tories, like himself, only a little more bourgeois'.[63] Yet, while considering his words 'ominous and grave' (p. 48), Stevenson also confidently declares this prosperous but working-class radical 'a gentleman': it is only later that a mediating hand decides this pronouncement unfit for publication.

Indeed, the potential for slippage between social hierarchies is present throughout the text and is nowhere more apparent than in the narrator himself. As in *An Inland Voyage*, class distinctions are depicted as unstable. After less than ten

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[60] Phillips, 'Class and "Race"', p. 43.
[61] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 172.
[62] Phillips, 'Class and "Race"', p. 52.
[63] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 173.

days at sea, Stevenson declares: 'The steerage conquered me; I conformed more and more to the type of the place, not only in manner but at heart, growing hostile to the officers and cabin passengers who looked down upon me' (p. 62). Not only does he pass 'for nearly anything you please except an educated gentleman' (p. 60), but he feels his own actions and affiliations begin to shift. On one occasion, he finds himself so assimilated into life in steerage that he feels the need to 'study the brass plate' that denotes his second passenger status. This is the sign that declares his room for 'gentlemen' rather than 'ladies', whereas in steerage the passengers are simply 'males and females' (p. 8). While recognising the complexity of *The Amateur Emigrant*'s exploration of class divisions, Hayward argues that Stevenson 'periodically reassert[s] his middle-class "respectability" and distinction from' the steerage passengers.[64] Yet rather than reinforcing rigid class distinctions with this marker of rank, the narrator positions it as the last weak emblem of his middle-class status, after his assumed superiority of 'speech and manner' fails to secure it (*AE*, 72). Unable to rely on these conventional demarcations of 'respectability', the speaker mocks the triviality of this last signifier of class: 'For some time after I came aboard I thought I was only a male; but in the course of a voyage of discovery between decks, I came on a brass plate, and learned that I was still a gentleman' (pp. 8–9). With his social position dependent on nothing more than a sign on the ship, Stevenson undermines the notion of essential class distinctions; it is this self-interrogation of the narrator's own middle-class identity that McCracken-Flesher suggests 'Stevenson the elder' may have so 'disliked' about the text.[65]

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[64] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 248.
[65] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 96.

Of course, there were also more practical reasons why Thomas Stevenson disapproved of his son's third book of travel. Hart notes how '[i]t would not have required a lawyer like [Stevenson's] friend Charles Baxter to point out that the Anchor Line might find actionable material in the text, that some of the officers or crew of its *Devonia* could possibly discover libellous statements.'[66] Stevenson is eloquent in his condemnation of the conditions on board the ship. Drawing on his experiences travelling for his father's lighthouse company, he describes how 'the life of a North Sea fisher is one long chapter or exposure and hard work and insufficient fare' (p. 46). Aboard the *Devonia*, however, 'the steerage […] had been too vile [even] for the endurance of a man thus rudely trained' (p. 47). As Reid explains, 'accounts of the journey across ocean and continent proliferated in this period, but writers usually travelled by saloon class'; Stevenson's view from the steerage quarters offered a very different perspective.[67] Thomas Stevenson had a business relationship with the owners of the *Devonia* (Henderson Brothers), and, at the suggestion of another attempt to publish *The Amateur Emigrant* in April 1881, he wrote to his son in no uncertain terms:

> I am so far from done with Henderson that he is my chief friend and he came to Edinburgh to conciliate between us and the Glasgow people and to arrange payment of our £2000 account. So nothing can be done that can possibly reflect upon him. (*Letters*, III, 167)

Yet, while this was undoubtedly a concern for Thomas, even his son's assurance that he would 'leave out the names of the Clyde and the like; so that it could be identified with nowhere' (*Letters,* III, 167), did not assuage him. This resolute refusal perhaps suggests it is the content of the text, which Thomas considered so 'unworthy' of his intellectual middle-class son, that lay at the heart of his discontent – Stevenson's

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[66] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxxviii.
[67] Reid, 'Introduction', p. l.

identification with the economic migrants of Europe too controversial for his

respectable family in Edinburgh.

In both content and style, *The Amateur Emigrant* proved dramatically

different from the one Stevenson's friends and family had expected. With its frank

and direct language depicting the squalor and hardships of emigration, not to

mention its critique of class inequality and industrial capitalism, this travel account is

a world away from his whimsical journeys through the French countryside. While

Stevenson's narrator adopts an ambivalent perspective on class differences, his

conservative statements are undercut by moments of liberal social commentary and

an appreciation for the individual characters among the steerage passengers, some of

which is lost in the cuts made for the Edinburgh Edition. Through his depiction of

the lives on board the ship, Stevenson does at least dispel the romantic myths of

emigration. As Hayward declares, 'after reading Stevenson's account, readers could

no longer see emigration as an imperial adventure, nor the emigrants themselves as

either heroes or the Great Unwashed'.[68] In fact, Ambrosini views the political

ambivalence in *The Amateur Emigrant* as meaningful and potentially radical in

itself, explaining:

> The discoveries Stevenson is making are all the more significant, in that he
> makes his growing admiration for the working-class passengers – and, more
> dangerously, his identification with them – interact with the class prejudices
> he continues to share with his readers.[69]

Stevenson's experience on board the emigrant ship did not convert the middle-class

Tory into a political radical. It did, however, engender a book that takes as its focus

the lives of some of the poorest sections of society, while undermining the notion of

intrinsic differences between social classes. In fact, the greatest testament to the

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[68] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 248.
[69] Ambrosini, 'Four Boundary-Crossings', p. 29.

challenges it posed to conventional middle-class sensibilities is its own deferred

history of publication, the work in its entirety not reaching the reading public until

1966, some eighty-five years after its original completion.

<div align="center">*</div>

In the preceding section, I considered the thematic and stylistic features of *The

Amateur Emigrant* that may have alienated the work's first readers. Including its

focus on squalid conditions, the dramatic shift in style and (at times) an almost

liberal social commentary, these are generally acknowledged by commentators to

explain why the book did not reach publication until after Stevenson's death.

Phillips, for example, argues it is the 'frankness and naturalism that inform *The

Amateur Emigrant*' that shocked the author's 'family and literary friends', declaring

this to be 'the main reason why the entire manuscript was not published in his

lifetime'.[70] As we have seen, it was indeed Stevenson's father who ensured it was

withdrawn from Kegan Paul at the first attempt of publication and blocked any

suggestion of a second, apparently acting on his disapproval of the text and concern

for his son's reputation. *The Amateur Emigrant* was then left, until Colvin proposed

its inclusion in the Edinburgh Edition fourteen years later.

Yet, while it may have been Thomas Stevenson's conservative sensibilities

that determined its eventual fate, I want to argue that the initial, overwhelmingly

negative reaction from the author's literary friends was as much a response to *where*

the text was written as to how and what was written. Some scholars loosely reference

Stevenson's friends' disapproval of the American journey when discussing their

negative response to *The Amateur Emigrant*, but neglect a close analysis of his

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[70] Phillips, 'Class and "Race"', p. 40.

correspondence to substantiate the significance of this connection. Hart conjectures that, owing to his 'parochial outlook', Colvin believed Stevenson's 'writing would inevitably deteriorate if he persisted in remaining long in America', arguing that Colvin 'accordingly' wrote to the author criticising the text.[71] Yet, without more evidence from the letters, this statement – that it is Colvin's prejudices and not the text itself that prompts the criticism – relies too heavily on assertion and supposition to be wholly persuasive. Without ignoring the various possible reasons for his friends' distaste (already discussed in detail in the previous section), in this section I wish to examine closely the language of their letters to demonstrate the interconnectedness between their criticism of *The Amateur Emigrant* and the place in which it was written. As well as exploring the particular prejudices against American literary culture, I consider how the association between the quality of Stevenson's writing and his geographical mobility suggests a deeper fear of itinerancy, a concern that is repeatedly voiced throughout the author's peripatetic career.

As will have already become clear, Stevenson's close friends and family did not support his decision to leave for America. Yet it was less the idea of his crossing the Atlantic that disturbed them and more the possibility of a prolonged stay in the country. Shortly after Stevenson's departure, Henley wrote to Baxter explaining: 'He promised us he wouldn't go any further than New York, so that, whether he does any good or not, I hardly think he'll do any harm' (*Letters*, III, 4). The 'one thing' Henley 'feared for him' was that he would 'be induced to go to Monterey'. If Stevenson simply crossed the Atlantic and returned quickly all would be well: 'it will end in a book, I expect, and in a happier way of life' (III, 5). By the time his friends learnt of his departure for California, however, their letters became far more

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[71] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.

pessimistic in tone. At the same time, Stevenson sent back his first pieces of writing

from the country, and the reproach of his journey and the criticism of his texts are

very much entwined. In a letter to Baxter in December 1879, Colvin writes: 'Having

left his country and burdened himself with a divorced invalid, […] here he is doing

work which is quite below the mark, and will bring him, as my strong impression is,

neither money nor credit' (III, 38). Colvin refers to the perceived failure of the

writing and the issue of Stevenson's relocation in the same sentence, implying a

connection between the two, as he impresses the need for Stevenson's 'friends […]

to urge' him to return, suggesting that they use the 'substandard' work 'as an

additional reason for his coming home'. More significantly, Colvin's belief that 'this

cloud upon [Stevenson's] talents […] is likely to last […] as long as he lives away

from his equals' implies that the author's deteriorating work is the direct result of

leaving behind his literary friends in Britain.

Henley, who had expressed such foreboding about the possibility of

Stevenson travelling to California, is even more explicit in the connection he makes

between the author's perambulations and the quality of his writing. Writing to

Colvin in January 1880, Henley agrees that 'it is absolutely necessary that he should

be brought to see England and a quiet life are what he wants and must have if he

means to make – I won't say reputation – but money by literature' (*Letters*, III, 40).

Despite this conviction that England is the only suitable soil for Stevenson's literary

career, Henley does not immediately write to lambast his friend, 'being too

blasphemously given towards California and Californian things to trust [him]self'

(III, 40). Such parochial sentiments, alongside his self-confessed prejudice towards

the place where Stevenson may settle, reveal a partiality that could well have

influenced his reaction to the material sent back from America. While not writing to

Stevenson himself at this moment, he encourages Colvin to do so:

> You may expect that Louis will resent our criticism of the last three works; I
> know he will. But I think it right he should get them; *et avec*, a confident
> expression of hope for the future, and as confident a prediction that Monterey
> and he will never produce anything worth a damn. (III, 40)

Place and writing are so intimately related for Henley here that he personifies

Monterey, configuring it as a partner or collaborator in Stevenson's literary

endeavours. As previously noted, there are many reasons why Stevenson's friends

might have been shocked by his writings from America (or by *The Amateur*

Emigrant at least). Yet equally important to consider is the degree of disquiet caused

by his journey across the continent and its motives, and how intimately his

correspondents connect this relocation with his writing. Colvin claims to have been

'cast down' at first about the journey but 'absolutely dismayed' after reading the

work it engendered (III, 38). Yet, when examining their criticism, the reverse seems

just as likely to be true. The links his friends make between his trip to America and

the work he produces there suggest that, just as alarm at the writing soured their

view of the journey, displeasure with the trip predisposed them to respond negatively

to the texts, to immediately decry the changes they saw in the writing he sent back.

Indeed, the negative response to Stevenson's writing from this period was far

from universal. Other figures within the London literary world, men less intimately

connected to the author so less invested in his life choices, approved of them,

perhaps further exposing a prejudice on the part of Stevenson's close friends. Before

The Amateur Emigrant was offered to Kegan Paul it was due to be published in

Good Words. The periodical, however, was oversupplied with material; the publisher

would have held it until 1881 but did not want to pay in advance, so Colvin and

Henley withdrew the manuscript.[72] In February 1880 the editor of *Good Words*, Donald Macleod, wrote to James Runciman (a friend of Henley's who had been negotiating with the publisher), declaring *The Amateur Emigrant* 'capital – full of force and character and fine feeling, and quite the kind of thing which will suit *Good Words*' (*Letters*, III, 65). Writing to his parents in 1881, Stevenson revealed that the poet and literary critic John Addington Symonds, thought 'it greatly the simplest and most interesting of my performances; and a book so different from the others it would do me good' (III, 167). A century later, critics of the work tended to share the view of Macleod and Symonds: J. C. Furnas declares it a 'work of prophetic merit', while Andrew Noble lauds it as the author's preeminent text – 'great prose' and 'a book which, arguably, [Stevenson] was not to equal'.[73]

The contradictory opinions from other members of Stevenson's network, as well as the fact that it found two publishers willing to buy it, suggests *The Amateur Emigrant* was not as inherently flawed as Colvin and Henley pronounced it. Certainly, Stevenson recognised the immoderate nature of the criticism levelled at him. He accepted Colvin's critique in a letter from January 1880, concluding: 'Well, God's will be done; if it's dull, it's dull; it was a fair fight' (*Letters*, III, 158). Yet he mused that 'the public […] may like this vein of dulness', before continuing:

> Only, frankly, Colvin, do you think it a good plan to be so eminently descriptive, and even eloquent in dispraise. You rolled such a lot of polysyllables over me that a better man than I might have been disheartened. (III, 159)

He reiterated his surprise at the disproportionate criticism in a letter to Baxter, a month later:

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[72] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 43.
[73] J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), p. 146; Andrew Noble (ed.), 'Introduction', in *From the Clyde to California: Robert Louis Stevenson's Emigrant Journey* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985), pp. 1–15 (p. 13).

> I was a little morbid a month or two ago, […] and in the receipt of a
> correspondence that would have taken the starch out of Mark Tapley.[74]
> People rolled letters on to me like boulders, and then ran away and pelted me
> with notes like road metal. I feared to open an envelope, there was sure to be
> some damned torpedo. (III, 63)

Stevenson acknowledged that, since arriving in America, the criticism of his

writing had turned from the constructive to the downright pejorative. And his

friends' objections were not limited to *The Amateur Emigrant,* but were levelled at

all of the material he sent them from his first months in the US. The 'criticism of the

last three works' that Henley mentions in his letter to Colvin also refers to 'The

Story of a Lie' and 'The Pavilion on the Links', both of which found publishers.

Indeed, while Furnas acknowledges that 'they may have been right, however short-

sightedly, to fret over the *Emigrant* […] their verdict on *The Pavilion on the Links*

[…] was most gratifyingly reversed in a higher court when Stephen bought it for the

Cornhill'.[75] After hearing this news in a letter from Henley, Stevenson's satisfaction

is clear in his reply: 'The Dooke de Korneel, K.C.B taken a blood and thunder! Well,

I *thought* it had point now I know it' (*Letters*, III, 49). While expressing surprise at

the excessive criticism, there is only one occasion when Stevenson questions the

motives behind it. In this case, he does not refer to his friends' dissatisfaction with

his journey but, in a letter to Henley, recognises an impulse in his friend to shape his

literary output: 'You are wrong about "Lie" […] you were not quite sincere with

yourself; you were seeking arguments to make me devote myself to plays,

unbeknown, of course, to yourself' (III, 35). Stevenson had recently written *Deacon*

Brodie, or the Double Life with Henley, but here had to inform him that it did not

make sense to pursue further such collaborations while in dire financial straits:

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[74] The permanently optimistic character in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.
[75] Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 155.

'Plays, dear boy, are madness for me just now' (III, p. 35). Yet, while Stevenson

may not acknowledge it, the fact that the first three works he sent Henley and Colvin

from America were denounced, to an extent that Stevenson does recognise as

excessive, is a further indicator that the criticism was augmented by concerns

external to the texts.

Colvin's assertion that Stevenson must return 'to his equals' if he is to write

literature that is up to 'the mark' is certainly evidence of a parochial outlook; yet it

also implies a level of cultural or national elitism. In the letter to Baxter about

Stevenson's 'substandard' work from America, Colvin expresses fear at the

possibility 'of his settling to some cadging second-rate literary work out there'. By

the end of the message, Colvin's valuation of literary culture in the American West

has dropped a few more notches, as he despairs at the idea of the author 'settling

down to some third-rate or fifteenth-rate existence out there for good' (*Letters*, III,

38). Harman explains how 'Colvin and Henley were appalled at the sort of company

their friend had fallen in with and everything to do with the uncivilised backwater he

was living in'. When Joe Strong, the husband of Fanny's daughter, sent news about

Stevenson's health during a period of illness, Colvin related this correspondence

'with the spelling mistakes pointedly preserved – "The climet seems to agree well

with him – his spirits are equel to his health"'.[76] While such latent snobbery reveals

Colvin's distaste for the company and the region Stevenson was inhabiting, it is

perhaps also indicative of wider attitudes to American literary culture. Referencing

'a chorus of British and European critics of the new nation', Robert Gross describes

the widespread sentiment towards 'American literature in the nineteenth century':

> 'Literature the Americans have none – no native literature… It is all
> imported,' the Rev. Sydney Smith pronounced in the *Edinburgh Review*. In

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[76] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 187

1820, Smith famously insulted American pride: 'In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?'[77]

Almost two decades later, Harriet Martineau concluded that, 'if the American nation be judged of by its literature, it may be pronounced to have no mind at all'. As Gross explains, this verdict persisted throughout the century: 'In 1888, the English critic Matthew Arnold echoed Sydney Smith. For all their industrial success and national wealth, Americans were lacking in civilization: "In literature they have as yet produced little that is important."'[78]

Such pronouncements provide an illuminating context for Stevenson's friends' insistence that he will 'never produce anything worth a damn' in America. Part of the reason for these prejudices might be found in the condition of the global book trade itself. As Barnes et al. observe, throughout the nineteenth century 'London remained the largest international producer of English-language titles, with New York, Boston and Edinburgh following far behind'.[79] During this period, the importing of books from Britain remained a significant part of the American book trade: 'In the federal fiscal year ending in 1876, for example, the value of books and other printed material imported from the United Kingdom was $1,536,599.' In comparison, the United States only exported $97,499 worth of printed material to Britain.[80] It was the 'passage of an international copyright law' in 1891 that 'signalled the maturation of the American publishing and book trades, […] and by 1914 it was poised to grow into the international force in publishing that it became

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[77] Robert A. Gross, 'Building a National Literature: The United States 1800–1890', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. by Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 315–28 (p. 315).

[78] Gross, 'Building a National Literature', p. 315.

[79] John Barnes, et al., 'A Place in the World', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. by David McKitterick, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 595–634 (p. 597).

[80] Barnes et al, 'A Place in the World', p. 611.

during the twentieth century'.[81] Throughout the previous century, however, the

United States' book market could not compete with that of Britain: Gross asserts that

'America remained a cultural colony of the Old World well into the nineteenth

century', explaining that a 'call for literary independence was but one in a litany of

complaints about native mediocrity heard throughout the century'.[82] One area of

print culture that did flourish in America was newspapers. With the aim of

generating 'a greater sense of nationality', the federal government granted 'the press

[…] special privileges accorded to no other genre of print'; 'as early as 1800, the

Portfolio dubbed Americans a "nation of newspaper readers"'.[83] Yet even this

thriving market could have fuelled the national snobbery demonstrated by

Stevenson's friends in the London literary elite. As Gross explains, 'books carried a

cultural prestige lacking in periodicals': 'they were made to last, embodying

"timeless" knowledge across the generations; newspapers, by contrast, were

typically as short-lived as the information they contained.'[84] Stevenson articulates

exactly this perception in *The Amateur Emigrant* when he notes: 'newspaper

reading, as far as I can make out, is often rather a sort of brown study than an act of

culture' (*AE*, 66).

As I have demonstrated, Stevenson's friends' aversion to his prolonged stay

in America, as well as their seeming national or cultural elitism, are intimately

intertwined with their negative responses to his first work from the country, and

contributed to the fraught publishing history of *The Amateur Emigrant*. Yet this

dismay at his removal from the literary circle of London stretches beyond simply his

first journey to America, suggesting a more pervasive concern regarding itinerancy

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[81] Barnes et al, 'A Place in the World', p. 613.
[82] Gross, 'Building a National Literature', p. 315.
[83] Gross, 'Building a National Literature', p. 317.
[84] Gross, 'Building a National Literature', p. 320.

and authorship. As I have detailed in the Introduction of this thesis, and as I will

explore in the final two chapters, one of the defining features of Stevenson's life and

literary career is his mobility. This habit of travel, however, despite inspiring many

of the author's most interesting works, was often viewed as a factor limiting his true

potential. Such a response to excessive mobility is not unusual. As, again, I have

explored in the Introduction, place, home and roots are often implicitly held as moral

concepts, with mobility, by implication, appearing 'to involve a number of absences

– the absence of commitment, attachment and involvement – a lack of significance.'

If place as home is, as Cresswell asserts, 'perhaps the most important significance-

giving factor in human life',[85] it follows that a secure attachment to place may also

be deemed necessary to produce 'significant' literature. Throughout his life,

Stevenson's literary friends and the wider reading public frequently associated the

quality of his writing with his geographical location, a recurring lamentation being

his failure to settle in Britain (usually London) where he could produce literature of

real value. First evident in this inaugural trip outside of Europe, this concern

becomes pronounced during his years in the Pacific. In response to parts of his

writing from this region, Stevenson's friend and 'man of letters' Edmund Gosse

decides that it must be 'nice to *live* in Samoa, but not healthy to *write* there', the

ideal 'literary atmosphere' in his eyes being 'within a three-mile radius of Charing

Cross'.[86] Oscar Wilde also directly relates Stevenson's geographical location with

the quality and nature of his work: 'In Gower Street Stevenson could have written a

new *Trois Mousquetaires*. In Samoa he wrote letters to *The Times* about Germans.'[87]

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[85] Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 16.
[86] Edmund Gosse to George A. Armour in Evan Charteris (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse* (New York: Haskell House, 1973), p. 223.
[87] Oscar Wilde quoted in Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 14.

Such statements chime with the earlier confident assurances from

Stevenson's friends that he would never produce work of value while in America

and apart from 'his equals'. They conflict, however, with the sentiments of

Stevenson himself, who just as frequently articulates his need for travel. The winter

after he returned from the US, Stevenson spent five months in Davos, Switzerland.

From there he wrote to Colvin in March 1881:

> I have been here a little overlong. […] [S]ince I have known you, already
> quite a while, I have not, I believe remained so long in any one place as here
> in Davos. That tells on my old gipsy nature; like a violin hung up, I begin to
> lose what music there was in me; and with the music, I do not know what
> besides, or do not know what to call it, but something radically part of life, a
> rhythm, perhaps, in one's old and so brutally overridden nerves, or perhaps a
> kind of variety of blood that the heart has come to look for (*Letters*, III, 161).

In the previous chapter, I described how Stevenson's early authorial identity seems

reliant on movement, rather than secured by a particular place. It is this concept that

Stevenson articulates here: the 'music' or creativity that drives his writing is harder

to capture during a prolonged period of stasis, with his mobility fettered by ill health.

Yet it is exactly this urge to travel, this refusal to base himself or his career in one

place, that distresses Stevenson's literary friends. Like Cresswell, Massey explains

'how disturbing such mobility, such apparent lack of attachment to a single place,

can be […] to other people's sense of what is "right and proper" – such wandering is

a challenge, perhaps, to their own priorities of settledness and establishment.'[88]

In the first chapter I explored the centrality of the Savile Club to Stevenson's

burgeoning career, demonstrating the significance of this dense network of literary

associates to his early success. Operating within a cycle of reading, reviewing, and

recommending each other's work, this network and its London location was key to

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[88] Doreen Massey (ed.), 'The Conceptualization of Place', in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures
and Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 46–79 (p. 51).

the lives and careers of many of the men within it. Thus, as well as challenging their

'priorities of settledness and establishment', Stevenson's mobility was, perhaps, a

challenge to their own identities as members of the literary elite. As is clear from

their statements above, many of Stevenson's network persisted in attempting to

locate the author and his 'true' literary identity in London, unable to reconcile his

mobility with their idea of what a British 'man of letters' should be. It is a mistrust

of unsettledness, as well as a belief that attachment to place is necessary to define

and secure identity, that Stevenson's friends betray at this point and assert repeatedly

through his career; as I will demonstrate, it is exactly this concept that Stevenson

questions in his writing from California.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

The decision not to publish *The Amateur Emigrant* until 1895, and then not in full

until the 1960s, left a significant rupture in Stevenson's oeuvre. A work so unlike

any he had published previously, it had the potential to dramatically alter his public

profile and professional reputation, both at the time and after his death. As

MacLachlan argues, by eliding its most controversial aspects, 'a very significant

element was […] missing from the picture of Stevenson that his works presented to

the world'. Laying the blame with Fanny Stevenson, he suggests:

> It is well known that [Stevenson's] widow did her best to protect and project
> her view of him as a romantic writer of wholesome and elegant fiction,
> suitable for family reading, an image of Stevenson that soon led those who
> were anxious to debunk Victorian pieties to attack his literary reputation and
> do their best to consign him to the nursery as only a writer for children.[89]

Yet this gap in the public's knowledge of Stevenson can hardly be attributed to

Fanny alone. The role played by Sidney Colvin, both as the first reader of the

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[89] MacLachlan, 'Introduction', p. xxxiii.

Emigrant and as the later editor of his friend's letters and collected works, as well as the influence of Thomas Stevenson and the author's other literary friends, cannot be overlooked. McCracken-Flesher laments not the effect of the exclusion on Stevenson's literary status, but the consequences for the genre. Identifying moments of 'literary naturalism' that were excised from the *Emigrant*, where 'the real echoed shockingly in travel writing', she writes: 'What a loss to the development of travel writing as a genre capable of travelling not just across place, but in inner space, and of adjusting the human relationships within which, Stevenson shows, it exists.'[90]

Yet, while the text did not reach the eyes of the public during his lifetime, and nor did his harshest critics of the twentieth century get a full appraisal of his literary output, *The Amateur Emigrant* can still be seen to have had a profound impact on Stevenson's subsequent career. Even after the barrage of criticism he received from its initial readers, the author remained confident about the change in his style that the *Emigrant* represented. Writing to Henley in early 1880, Stevenson assures him:

> I do not mind about the *Emigrant*. I never thought it a masterpiece. It was written to sell, and I believe it will sell; and if it doesn't, the next will. You need not be uneasy about my work, I am only beginning to see my true method. (*Letters*, III, 56)

At the same time he sends a letter to Colvin, declaring he is 'not frightened' or 'disheartened': 'I know my mind is changing; I have been telling you so for long; and I suppose I am fumbling with a new vein. Well, I'll find it.' (III, 58) Stevenson had indeed been examining his literary method for some time. In August 1877 he sent the recently written 'Will o' the Mill' to Leslie Stephen 'in a fit of haste', telling Frances Sitwell:

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[90] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 98.

> Vividness and not style, is now my line; style is all very well, but vividness is the real line of country; if a thing is meant to be read; it seems just as well to try and make it readable. (II, 218)

It was not until he left for America, however, and 5000 miles separated him from the 'doyens of style in Britain',[91] that Stevenson truly puts these sentiments into practice and achieves the dramatic shift in style he predicts. Phillips claims that *The Amateur Emigrant* 'indicates a profound change' in the author's writing,[92] while Robert-Louis Abrahamson views the 'year-long trip to America as a watershed moment', suggesting we can 'indeed […] see a shift in Stevenson's essays after his return from California'.[93] Ambrosini attributes the change in style to the author's experience of crossing ocean and continent with parties of emigrants, 'enlarging for the first time the notion of an ideal readership of his romances': 'Suddenly, pleasure-inducing stories appeared far more serious to him than the aestheticizing stylistic exercises he had engaged in through the 1870s.'[94] Stevenson's insistence on his new philosophy of writing, while first professed in 1877, did indeed become more frequent and emphatic after he journeyed across the Atlantic and set the account of his experience down on paper. Writing to Colvin again in January 1880, he declared that his 'sympathies and interests are changed':

> I know I shall do better work than ever I have done before; but mind you, it will not be like it. […] I care for nothing but the moral and the dramatic, not a jot for the picturesque or the beautiful, other than about people. (*Letters*, III, 60)

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[91] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 96.
[92] Phillips, 'Class and "Race"', p. 40.
[93] Abrahamson, 'The Essays must fall from me', p. 20.
[94] Ambrosini, 'The Four Boundary-Crossings', p. 27.

In the same month he sent a letter to John Mieklejohn, Professor of Education at St

Andrews and fellow member of the Savile Club, explaining his new outlook on the

purpose of literature:

> And Frankly, Meiklejohn, it is not Shakespeare we take to, when we are in a
> hot corner; nor, certainly, George Eliot – no, nor even Balzac. It is Charles
> Reade, or old Dumas, or the Arabian Nights, or the best of Walter Scott; it is
> stories we want, not the high poetic function which represents the world; […]
> We want incident, interest, action: to the devil with your philosophy. (III, 61)

After experiencing first-hand the realities of life for many people outside his

privileged, bourgeois society, Stevenson propounds a view on the function of

literature that rings discordantly with his previous aesthetic pieces.[95]

In the decade following his trip to America, this altered perception on what

writing should aim for or achieve is evident in Stevenson's literary output. Indeed, it

is two pieces of fiction that deliver the requisite 'incident, interest' and 'action' that

first brought the author real celebrity, and for which he is largely remembered

today: Stevenson first published *Treasure Island* in 1882 (in book form in 1883),

followed by *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1886. They did not,

however, entirely obscure his earlier work: referring to the critical backlash after his

death, MacLachlan argues that 'Stevenson's early associations with the late

Victorian men of letters came back to haunt him in the twentieth century'.[96]

Frustration at being repeatedly judged by his earliest writing, however, is something

Stevenson himself expresses as early as 1882, describing himself as 'the infuriated

victim of his early works, who begs to clearly announce that he will be so no

longer' (*Letters*, III, 294). In this letter to Henley in March of that year,

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[95] Stevenson elaborates his views on fiction and literature four years later in his well-documented
debate with Henry James. James published 'The Art of Fiction' in *Longman's Magazine* in September
1884, declaring that the novel competes with, or represents, real life. Stevenson responded with 'A
Humble Remonstrance' in the same publication in December 1884, where he propounds the view of
art in opposition to life. For more details see John Lyon, 'Stevenson and Henry James', in *EC*, pp.
134–146.
[96] MacLachlan, 'Introduction', p. xxxiii.

Stevenson addresses 'those who ask me […] to do nothing but refined, high toned, bejay, bedam masterpieces', dismissing their appeals in no uncertain terms:

> I'll trouble them to hold their tongues and shut their jaw, by God. That kind of business commences to tickle me the wrong way. I will swallow no more of that gruel. Let them write their damn masterpieces for themselves, and let me alone, I don't want to hear more of such effeminate, unjust, cultchaw, filthy, pragmatical, affected snot – and so you may inform the crew (III, 293–94).

It would, of course, be reductive to consider the transatlantic crossing as marking a sudden and complete transformation in Stevenson's literary productions. McCracken-Flesher reminds us that, 'even as Stevenson tested the genre of travel writing, he also wrote in a more conventional mode. His 1884 essay 'Fontainebleau' […] dwells on the picturesque.'[97] Indeed, there are signs of the 'elegant generalisation' many expected from Stevenson's writing in his essays from California, certainly when compared to the stark descriptions of *The Amateur Emigrant*. These pieces, which reflect on the conditions of the American West in the early 1880s, as well as Stevenson's own experiences in the region, share more features with his early works of picturesque travel than his account of the emigrant ship ever would. Nevertheless, the insights Stevenson gained during his journey across ocean and continent permeate the texts which follow it. Alongside depictions of coastal landscapes and mountain retreats, these essays and travel books reveal a pervasive interest in the dynamic forces of modernity. With a focus on the intense mobility of people in the region, as well as the mobility inherent in the American identity, Stevenson explores the impact of expanding networks of transport and human migration, questioning how such mobility unsettles the straightforward

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[97] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 95.

alignment of place and identity. Driven by the constantly shifting environment of the

American West, he depicts place as permeable and interconnected, protean sites that

may not be secure supports of national and cultural identities. While, back home, his

literary friends scrambled to securely locate him in Britain, Stevenson constructs a

progressive concept of global space that is not defined by nations and borders, but by

the networks of social relations that are connecting places across the world.

'We all belong to many countries': Place, Identity and the Alternative
Geographical Imaginary in Stevenson's Californian Texts

Stevenson's year in California can be loosely separated into three phases: i) his

arrival and stay in Monterey, from 31 August 1879 until just before Christmas; ii)

his stay in the San Francisco area until 22 May 1880; iii) finally his extended

honeymoon in Calistoga and Silverado until the end of July 1880, shortly after which

he returned to New York and crossed the Atlantic to Liverpool.[98] Out of each of

these relationships with specific Californian places Stevenson produced literary

texts, reflections on the characters of these locations that have become some of the

most neglected pieces in the author's oeuvre. In this part of the chapter, I examine

the often overlooked essays from California, 'The Old Pacific Capital' (1880) and 'A

Modern Cosmopolis' (1883), as well as *The Silverado Squatters* (1884) and the

second part of *The Amateur Emigrant*, 'Across the Plains' (1883). Stevenson's essay

on Monterey, 'The Old Pacific Capital', was published in *Fraser's Magazine* in

November 1880, and was later included in *Across the Plains* (1892). 'A Modern

Cosmopolis', the essay about San Francisco, first appeared in the *Magazine of Art* in

May 1883. The essays were first published together in the 1895 Edinburgh Edition

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[98] Anne Roller Issler, 'Robert Louis Stevenson in Monterey', *Pacific Historical Review*, 34.3 (1965), 305–21 (p. 305).

under the joint title 'The Old and New Pacific Capitals', with the names of the two

cities given as subtitles.[99] In his 1966 collection of Stevenson's American works,

Hart replicates this style from the Edinburgh Edition, and it is as 'Monterey' and

'San Francisco' that I will refer to the essays in this thesis.

   The Silverado Squatters details Stevenson's honeymoon period in the Napa

Valley during May and June 1880. As well as covering his stay in Calistoga, the

book describes the new family's brief residence in the abandoned Silverado mine on

the slopes of Mt St Helena. In 1882 Stevenson rewrote his journal from this period,

eventually finding a publisher in Chatto and Windus in early 1884.[100] Despite the

four-year hiatus, *The Silverado Squatters* grew directly out of the experiences he

recorded during his trip; indeed, Hart asserts that 'what [Stevenson] wrote in the

journal […] is not the raw material of a book; it is the rough draft.'[101] As Hart goes

on to explain, these 'sketches' that came out of Stevenson's Californian residence

'were far more satisfactory to [the author's] official literary guardians. The one on

Monterey opens with a softly descriptive, charmingly picturesque view of the lovely

natural setting.'[102] Hart also groups *The Silverado Squatters* with Stevenson's two

preceding, European travel books, while recognising the evident influence of his

recent trip across the Atlantic and the new style of *The Amateur Emigrant*. He notes

that *The Silverado Squatters* 'has the character developed in the more recent' book

of travel, but 'the subject has the charm inherent in the earlier works.'[103] Yet, while

all of these works might represent a return to the 'charm' associated with

Stevenson's early writing, they also retain the new attention to modernisation and

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[99] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 55.
[100] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, pp. 75–76.
[101] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xliii.
[102] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xlii.
[103] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xliii.

globalisation, the interest in the concerns of an increasingly mobile and diverse

society, that were fostered during his journey across the Atlantic.

During the past decade, Stevenson's Californian writing has drawn more

critical attention, although still far less than the majority of his other texts. In

particular, Jennifer Hayward and Caroline McCracken-Flesher have offered

insightful readings, both considering the challenges to ideas of national identity that

emerge in this material. McCracken-Flesher identifies in *The Silverado Squatters* the

'swinging of international identity round the carefully composed figure of the

suffering author in the landscape'.[104] Similarly, Hayward has argued that these 'early

travel writings test boundaries, both national and generic', as Stevenson 'captures the

paradoxes of the rapidly changing Californian culture'.[105] The remainder of this

chapter will also consider the questions these works raise about notions of national

belonging. I hope to add to this discussion, however, by exploring specifically

Stevenson's focus on mobility in America, suggesting it is this preoccupation that

enables his insights into the changing relationships between place, culture and

identity. Applying a literary geographical approach, I will consider the spatial

dimensions of Stevenson's Californian essays, examining his depictions of the

state's natural landscape and its newly formed cities while exploring the recurring

topics of transport and mobility in each text. I also add to recent critical readings of

these texts by considering what I term Stevenson's 'geographical imaginary'

alongside concepts and debates based in cultural geography. Drawing particularly on

Doreen Massey's theories of place and Tim Cresswell's examinations of mobility, I

suggest that it is Stevenson's concern with the proliferating networks of transport

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[104] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 97.
[105] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 233, 241.

and migration, and his exploration of how such mobility changes the nature of place,

that leads to the radical insights he achieves in *The Silverado Squatters*, in which he

questions the significance of national identity and nationhood in an increasingly

globalised age.

When Stevenson arrived in America in 1879, the nation was only three years

past its centennial and, as Hayward asserts, the state of California 'was still a virtual

terra incognita': 'The region did not become part of United States' territory until

1848 and did not achieve official statehood until 1850, after the Mexican-American

War.' [106] Yet, while Europeans may have still considered the West an 'unsettled

frontier' in 1879, the region's history is far more complex, as Hayward explains:

> While Native Americans had inhabited the West Coast for perhaps 14,000
> years, Spanish settlers began to colonise the coast only towards the end of the
> 17th century. In 1821, with the fall of the Spanish empire, the colonised
> region became the Mexican states of Alta and Baja California. But as the
> United States rose in power, the territory was increasingly contested, and
> ultimately ceded to the United States with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
> in 1848.[107]

It is from this point that the state began to change rapidly, particularly after the Gold

Rush of 1848–55. Steven Hahn describes how 'news of the gold discovery not only

stimulated the imaginations of people across the globe; it also inspired migrations of

such range and rapidity as to reduce the term "rush" to something of an

understatement':

> The first to arrive in numbers came, as might be expected, from nearby San
> Francisco, where according to observers, nearly the entire male population
> (and the population was already overwhelmingly male) had packed up and
> headed east to the foothills [of the Sacramento valley] by the end of May
> 1848. They were soon joined by emigrants from Oregon to the North, the
> Great Basin to the east, and the Mexican state of Sonora to the south. Then
> came Peruvians and Chileans, Hawai'ians and Tahitians, Australians and

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[106] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 240.
[107] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 242.

Chinese. A bit later came Americans from the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Southwest, English and Irish, Germans and French. Before it subsided, the rush may well have been the most culturally kaleidoscopic event in the history of the United States up to that time.[108]

The patterns of migration during the Gold Rush demonstrate both the widening networks of global transport and communication that had been developing through the nineteenth century and, as Hahn states, 'the reach of a globalizing economy', as the non-native population of California grew 'by roughly twenty-fold within five years'.[109] The completion of the transcontinental railroad connecting East to West in 1869 also led to a dramatic surge in California's population, increasing from about 380,000 in 1860 to just over 863,000 by 1880.[110] In addition, the 1870s saw the country's first major economic recession. As Swearingen notes, 'Stevenson thus writes of a country where internal migration […] was getting to be as common as foreign immigration, where the promised land in one decade was perceived in the next as best left behind.'[111] In the Introduction and the previous section of this chapter, I have considered the historic prejudice often held towards mobile people. As Cresswell suggests, however, in the history of America mobility is often seen in more positive terms: 'mobility has often been portrayed as the central geographical fact of American life, one that distinguished Euro-Americans from their European ancestors.' Frederick Jackson Turner's 'Frontier Thesis' of 1893,[112] for example,

> put movement at the centre of American history and identity. […] The United
> States was different from Europe, it was claimed, because its people were
> less rooted in space and time and therefore were free from the shackles of

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[108] Hahn, *Nation without Borders*, p. 144.
[109] Hahn, *Nation without Borders*, pp. 144, 145.
[110] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 242.
[111] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. xv.
[112] The 'Frontier Thesis' is an argument from historian Frederick Jackson Turner that states the moving frontier was instrumental in the formation of both American democracy and the essential features of a unique American character. He first put forward this thesis in a paper entitled 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', delivered to the American Historical Association in 1893 in Chicago.

both feudalism and industrial capitalism. A new American spirit was forged in the movement of people from other parts of the world and within the emerging nation. [113]

Central to this definition of modern American identity was the railroad, with over 166,000 miles of track in operation by 1890.[114] Stevenson's essays from California demonstrate a recurring focus on the railways, considering its impact on the landscape, as well as its role in transforming the social and economic composition of the region. In the first part of this chapter, we saw how *The Amateur Emigrant* explores the conditions of European migrants crossing the Atlantic, while the account of his subsequent journey 'Across the Plains' reveals the mass internal migration taking place in the nation. The Californian essays share this thematic focus on mobility, so that in the writing produced from his first journey to America Stevenson seems to define the country by trajectories of human movement.

Coming from a nation altered beyond recognition after the Industrial Revolution, Stevenson was familiar with the changes wrought on society by massive socio-economic upheaval. Yet it is the speed at which changes occur in California that Stevenson seems to marvel at in his essays on the region. The texts focus on places affected by the intense mobility of the people. He writes about the sudden emergence of San Francisco as a 'roaring city', the population of which grew from 1000 to 25,000 between January 1848 and December 1849, and had reached over 230,000 by the time Stevenson arrived in 1879.[115] In *The Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson describes the abandoned mining towns left behind after workers move on, considering how such rapid, persistent mobility creates 'relics' that are less than ten

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[113] Cresswell, *Tramp in America*, pp. 19–20.
[114] Barnes, et al., 'Place in the World', p. 610.
[115] MTC-ABAG Library, 'Population by County, 1860–2000', *Bay Area Census* (n.d.), <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/historical/copop18602000.htm> [accessed 12 June 2018].

years old. In fact, in all of Stevenson's Californian writing, there is a pervasive

preoccupation with the fluid and dynamic nature of place. Each text from this region

engages with the sudden and continuous changes to the landscape, as the movement

of people and pursuit of wealth continue to unsettle the area. Indeed, the American

West is depicted in such an insecure and transitional state that this volatility is

reflected in the natural world, with even the mountain home of Stevenson in *The*

Silverado Squatters liable to collapse at a moment's notice.

It is this focus on the potential instability of place that aligns Stevenson's

writing on America with the approaches from cultural geography, which challenge

the idea of places as bounded entities with essential characteristics, interpreting place

instead as fluid, open and relational. Massey is one of the key proponents of this

conception of place. She does not deny the uniqueness of places, but argues that

'what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact

that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and

weaving together at a particular locus.'[116] In my interpretation, which focuses on

networks of 'social relations' (human movements and communications across

space), 'each "place" can be seen 'as a particular, unique, point of their

intersection'.[117] Such a theory, therefore, identifies place as something that is never

finished or bounded, but continually constructed; in short, place is seen as a *process*.

Cresswell summarises this idea, suggesting that 'to think of place as an intersection –

a particular configuration of happenings – is to think of place in a constant sense of

becoming through practice and practical knowledge.' He describes 'place as an event

rather than a secure ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic': 'place as an

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[116] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), p. 154.
[117] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 154.

event is marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence.'[118] In Stevenson's Californian essays, his preoccupation with the networks of transport and patterns of migration connecting and altering the region leads to a portrayal of place as continually being remade, always open to influence and disruption. It is through his focus on the dynamic forces of modernity in America that Stevenson recognises and depicts such permeability and impermanence, locating the openness of place in the intense mobility of people living in and moving through it.

Yet moving beyond his reflections on this region specifically, Stevenson's experience in California leads him to meditate on the broader nature of place and identity in increasingly globalised times. Eric Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires draw on the networked interpretation of place, conceptualising it as fluid and, particularly as the forces of globalisation increase, susceptible to outside influence. Building on Massey's argument, they question the stability of cultural and national identity in an age of such shifting and increasing global connections. Instead, they describe the process by which the modern world destabilises the relation between place and identity: 'The forces of new technologies, globalization and "time-space compression" have together created a sense of information flows, fragmentation and pace replacing what is now perceived to be a previous stability of homogeneity, community and place.'[119] It is exactly such a disruption of 'homogeneity, community and place' that Stevenson conveys in his writings from America. In 1880, Stevenson was witnessing the early stages of the intense

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[118] Tim Cresswell, 'Theorizing Place', in *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World*, ed. by Tim Cresswell and Ginette Verstraete (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 11–31 (pp. 26, 20).
[119] Eric Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires (eds), 'Introduction', in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), pp. vii–xv (p. viii).

globalisation that Carter et al. suggest undermined 'the easy alliance of place and identity'.[120] As they explain: 'The presumed certainties of cultural identity, firmly located in particular places which housed stable cohesive communities of shared tradition and perspective, though never a reality for some, were increasingly disrupted and displaced for all.'[121] In his writing from California, I argue that Stevenson anticipates these ideas about the impact of modernity on straightforward associations between place, culture and identity. Challenging the notion of national belonging in a mobile, globalised age, Stevenson articulates a new geographical imagination, one that privileges the social networks that connect the world rather than the geographical boundaries that divide it.

<div align="center">*</div>

The geographical contours of the landscape are central to Stevenson's Californian essays. As Hart states, a 'sense of setting' runs through all of them, immediately evident in each of their opening paragraphs.[122] 'Monterey' begins with a description of the city's 'topography', plotting the shape of the landscape as it appears on a map:

> The Bay of Monterey has been compared by no less a person than General Sherman to a bent fishing-hook; […] Santa Cruz sits exposed at the shank; the mouth of the Salinas river is at the middle of the bend; and Monterey itself is cosily ensconced beside the barb.[123]

Stevenson lingers on the geographical and meteorological features of the region, describing how, 'even in quiet weather, the low, distant, thrilling roar of the Pacific hangs over the coast and the adjacent country like smoke above a battle' (p. 151). The first line of *The Silverado Squatters* also immediately locates the book's subject:

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[120] Carter et al, 'Introduction', p. viii.
[121] Carter et al, 'Introduction', p. vii.
[122] Hart, 'Introduction', p. xliv.
[123] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Monterey', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. by Hart, pp. 151–67 (p. 151). All further references are given in the text.

'The scene of this little book is on a high mountain', from whose 'summit you must have an excellent lesson in geography' (*SS*, 191). Even in 'Simoneau's at Monterey', a short essay unpublished until Hart's edition in 1966, the opening sentence is a reflection on the nature of place and representation in the geographical imaginary, as Stevenson writes: 'A place does not clearly exist for the imagination, till we have moved elsewhere.'[124]

This preoccupation with the geographical and cartographic is again evident in the opening lines of 'San Francisco', which explains how 'the Pacific coast of the United States, as you may see by the map, […] is one of the most exposed and shelterless on earth'.[125] In the first paragraphs of this essay, it not only the content but also the text's form that reflects the topographical features of the landscape:

> Within the memory of persons not yet old, a mariner might have steered into these narrows – not yet the Golden Gates – open out the surface of the bay – here girt with hills, there lying broad to the horizon – and beheld a scene as empty of the presence, as pure from the handiwork, of man, as in the days of the old sea-commander. ('San Francisco', 180)

If we consider the region on a map (see Figure 4), the dashes partitioning the sentence mirror the 'narrows' that are now bridged by the Golden Gates: the sentence follows the mariner's path, entering the channel formed by the adjacent bays and promontories, or the horizontal confines of the dashes, passing through these parameters before entering the wider expanse of the bay.

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[124] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Simoneau's at Monterey', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. by Hart, pp. 172–78 (p. 172). All further references are given in the text.
[125] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'San Francisco', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. by Hart, pp. 179–87 (p. 179). All further references are given in the text.
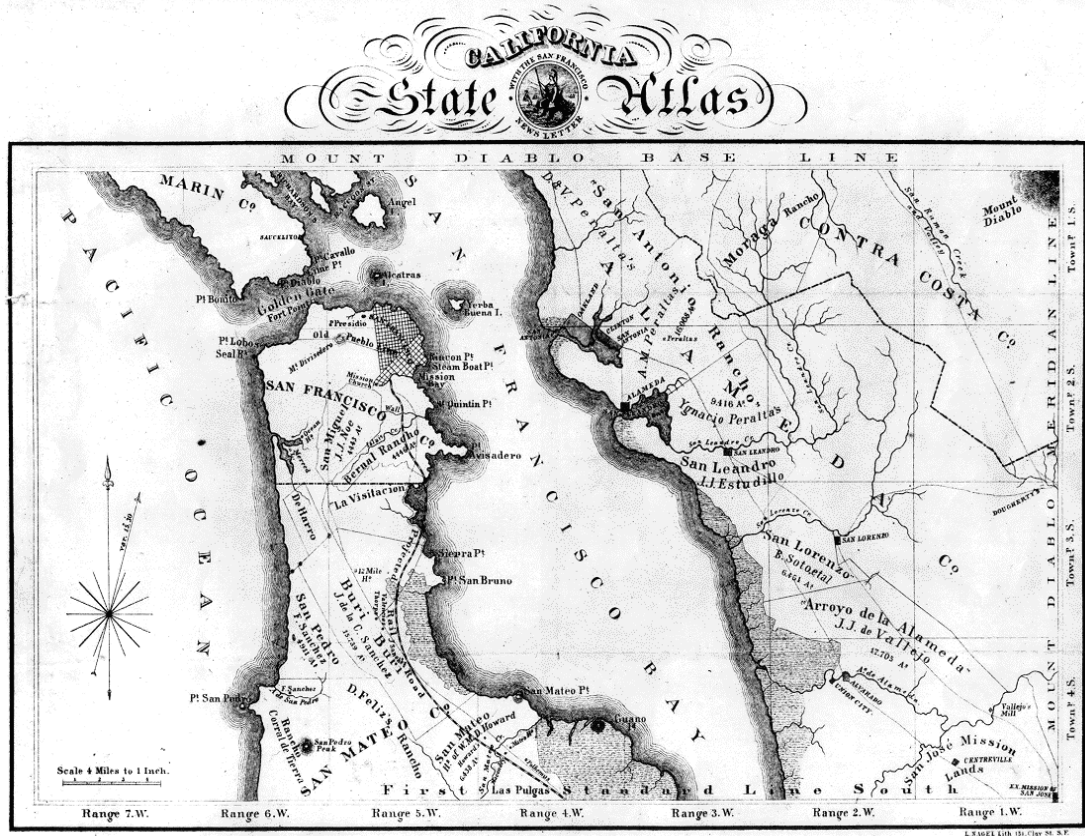
Figure 4. Historical map of San Francisco (1860)

Yet, while it describes the landscape as it would have been, 'empty of the presence

[…] of man', before the port became a centre of trade, Stevenson's syntactical

structure in this extract in fact reflects the scene he surveyed in 1880. Far from being

'pure from' man's 'handiwork', his prose is heavily broken up by caesuras and

interjections, just as San Francisco's landscape has been disrupted by the changes of

industrialisation.

    One of the central developments driving these changes was the

transcontinental railroad, connecting the West to the rest of America and facilitating

both trade and internal migration. Yet, in addition to the social and industrial

developments such improved connectivity enabled, the railroad itself also left its

mark on the landscape. Stevenson notes the dominance of the railway in the bleak

landscapes he travels through in 'Across the Plains': 'It was a world almost without

feature; an empty sky, an empty earth; front and back, the line of railway stretched

from horizon to horizon, like a cue across a billiard-board.'[126] A number of scholars

appear to consider this focus on the position of the railway in the landscape, as

opposed to the landscape itself, as a failure of the imagination. For instance, Robert

Kiely asserts that, when 'confronted with the vast sweep of the Wyoming desert,

[Stevenson's] imagination is oppressed, and turns back again and again to the mean

but familiar comforts of the railroad.'[127] Likewise, McCracken-Flesher agrees that

the author is bewildered by the 'extensive newness' of this terrain, vast country

unlike any he has experienced before. She writes that 'Nebraska, in fact, is so totally

and consistently and repeatedly new […] that it escapes the codes of western

romance'.[128]

Yet, through its focus on the railroad, 'Across the Plains' does not

necessarily neglect or fail to describe the landscape: for Stevenson, the train is *a part*

of this landscape, the 'one piece of life in all the deadly land'. The railway is granted

life, assigned agency: 'it [is] the one actor, the one spectacle fit to be observed in

this paralysis of man and nature' ('ATP', 128–29). Here, the modern mobility of the

railroad is valorised over the 'paralysis' of nature and pre-industrial life. Indeed, if

the natural or picturesque aspects of the country escape the codes of western

romance, it may be because, in this second part of his stark account of emigrant

travel, Stevenson's romantic eye is fixed squarely on the industrial. He imagines

> how the railroad has been pushed through this unwatered wilderness and
> haunt of savage tribes […]; how at each stage of the construction, roaring,
> impromptu cities, full of gold and lust and death, sprang up and then died
> away again […]; how in these uncouth places pig-tailed Chinese pirates

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[126] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Across the Plains', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. by Hart, pp. 100–47 (p. 123). All further references are given in the text.

[127] Robert Kiely, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 137–38.

[128] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'The Future is Another Country: Restlessness and Robert Louis Stevenson', *JSS*, 11 (2014), 3–16 (p. 11).

worked side by side with border ruffians and broken men from Europe. (p. 129)

Stevenson declares the railway 'the one typical achievement of the age in which we live, as if it brought together in one plot all the ends of the world'. Far from being deficient in romance, he asserts that these observations, made during his journey across the plains, will offer 'some great writer the busiest, the most extended, and the most varied subject for an enduring literary work' (p. 129).

Compared to the account of the sea voyage in *The Amateur Emigrant*, however, portions of Stevenson's Californian essays do at first appear to represent a return to his earlier focus on rustic but picturesque natural settings. However, the essays are not an uncomplicated reversion to type and Stevenson does not simply discard his newly developed interest in modernisation. While the opening pages of 'Monterey' are devoted to the natural environment, the descriptions are imbued with a sense of conflict, of nature having to assert its dominance over the land. Stevenson writes that 'the woods and the Pacific rule between them the climate of the seaboard region' ('Monterey', p. 155), but that 'the fogs are in possession of the lower levels': 'Where their shadow touches, colour dies out of the world. The air grows chill and deadly as they advance. […] It takes but a little while till the invasion is complete.' (pp. 157–58) This martial imagery runs throughout the passage: 'the thrilling roar of the Pacific hangs over the coast […] like smoke above a battle' (p. 151), while 'the whole woodland is begirt with thundering surges' (p. 153). Hayward recognises the opposition between nature and industrialisation that runs through Stevenson's Californian texts, terming it one of 'the traditional preoccupations of Europeans in the New World': 'the beauty, variety, and immensity of Nature's creations,

contrasted against the unsightliness, degeneration, and insignificance of human manufacture.'[129]

While nature and modernity are contrasted, however, it is not in quite such binary terms. Rather than assigning one precedence over the other, Stevenson depicts them in conflict, each battling for control of the landscape. While, in the passage quoted above, the sea is assigned power over the locality, it is portrayed as more eerie and threatening than beautiful: 'the haunting presence of the ocean […] follow[s] you', a 'sort of disquieting company' that 'sets your senses upon edge' (pp. 152–153). Importantly, this power dynamic shifts through the essays. Far from depicting human manufacture as insignificant, in 'San Francisco', Stevenson marvels at the speed and power with which the city has laid claim to the landscape:

> In this busy, moving generation, we have all known cities to cover our boyish playgrounds, we have all started for a country walk and stumbled on a new suburb; but I wonder what enchantment of the Arabian Nights can have equalled this evocation of a roaring city, in a few years of a man's life, from the marshes and the blowing sand. ('San Francisco', 181)

Here, nature is nothing but 'marshes' and 'sand', engulfed by the 'roaring city'. Thus, triumph of industry is not even considered unsightly, but ascribed the romance and exoticism of a tale from the *Arabian Nights*. Stevenson's writing has developed from picturesque accounts of the European countryside to reveal a new, persistent concern with the dynamic between landscape and modernity, and this focus is evident again in *The Silverado Squatters*. Returning, as he regularly does, to the overwhelming influence of the railroad, he describes how, 'at Calistoga, the railroad ceases […] blockaded by our mountain'. Here, the military language that pits nature against 'human manufacture' recurs: 'Mount Saint Helena is not only a summit, but

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[129] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 243.

a frontier; and, up to the time of writing, it has stayed the progress of the iron horse.'
(*SS*, 194) While the mountain has halted the development of the railroad, it is merely
a temporary triumph. Far from proclaiming the power and immensity of Nature's
creations, Stevenson cannot even guarantee that the victory still stands, willing only
to state the facts at 'the time of writing' and not to prognosticate on the future.

    The recurring presence of the railroad denotes a more extensive
preoccupation with transport and migration throughout Stevenson's Californian
writings. Indeed, his conception of America seems to be defined by trajectories of
human movement. After sailing across the Atlantic with Europeans destined for the
east coast of America, Stevenson found himself travelling on a train with emigrants
leaving these same places in search of a better life in the West. At the same time, as
Harman notes, he could not help but notice that 'emigrants were also streaming *away*
from California',[130] passing him on trains heading in the opposite direction ('ATP',
137). In *The Silverado Squatters*, the author describes how '[t]his stir of change and
these perpetual echoes of the moving footfall haunt the land. Men move eternally,
still chasing Fortune; and, Fortune found, still wander' (*SS*, 209). It is through such
'wandering' – through the intense mobility of people – that Stevenson identifies
place as open and unstable rather than bounded and permanent. Following Massey,
we can read in Stevenson's texts a recognition that new and growing networks, not
just of people but also of transport and trade, are disrupting the idea of place as
secure, as internally constructed and defined. Reflecting on the turbulent political
history of California since the 1820s, Stevenson declares that 'nothing is stranger in
that strange State than the rapidity with which the soil has changed hands'
('Monterey', 158). In *The Silverado Squatters*, it is not to politics that he attributes

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[130] Harman, *Stevenson*, p. 177.

this unsettledness of place, but to the movement of people driven by capitalism and industrialisation:

> One thing in this new country very particularly strikes a stranger, and that is the number of antiquities. […] The towns […] grow great and prosper by passing occasions; and when the lode comes to an end, and the miners move elsewhere, the town remains behind them, like Palmyra in the desert. I suppose there are, in no country in the world, so many deserted towns as here in California. (*SS*, 215)

Here, California is paradoxically figured as both young *and* old: it is a 'new country' that is continually changing, but with 'antiquities' and 'relics' from the recent past, the networks that construct place changing so rapidly that they disrupt the linearity of chronology and time.

Stevenson's writing from this period repeatedly marvels at the speed with which place can change in California, particularly 'San Francisco', which states that, 'in the course of a generation only, this city and its suburb have arisen' ('San Francisco', 180). Yet, in these essays, Stevenson's preoccupation with the fluidity of place in the region extends beyond the parameters of the manmade to influence his depiction of its natural landscape and geography. After reflecting on the area's sudden industrial growth, he theorises that 'such swiftness of increase, as with an overgrown youth, suggests a corresponding swiftness of destruction'. He notes that 'the sandy peninsula of San Francisco, […] shaken to the heart by frequent earthquakes, seems in itself no very durable foundation', adding: 'We are in early geographical epochs, changeful and insecure; and we feel, as with a sculptor's model, that the author may yet grow weary of and shatter the rough sketch' (p. 181). The openness and mutability of place that Stevenson recognises, and which he links to the sudden influx and mobility of people and trade, is mirrored in the landscape: Stevenson's essays on California are replete with such instances of unstable places.

Reflecting further on the erratic terrain on which San Francisco is built, he asserts that 'a trifling subsidence might drown the business quarters in an hour' (p. 182), burying the centre of finance and capitalism as quickly as it was built. In *The Silverado Squatters*, he witnesses 'a strange, impetuous, silent, shifting, exhibition of the powers of nature', seeing a 'familiar landscape changing from moment to moment like figures in a dream' (*SS*, 254). Here, the mountain scene he is surveying becomes engulfed in 'water (as it seemed so to the eye)', 'true Pacific billows, only somewhat rarefied, rolling in mid-air among the hill-tops' (p. 255). In the form of fog, the sea encroaches upon the land, the dramatic shifting of elements another unpredictable feature of this volatile country. Stevenson's depiction of unstable places stretches even to his own residence. The mine at Silverado is itself a transient site, for, 'as still' as it seems,

> at any moment the report of rotten wood might tell us that the platform had fallen into the shaft; […] or a wedge slip in the great upright seam, and hundreds of tons of mountain bury the scene of our encampment […]. (p. 279)

<div align="center">*</div>

Stevenson's Californian essays are preoccupied with the effects of an increasingly globalised world, depicting how the proliferating networks of trade, transport and migration are changing the nature of place in the region. A conception of place as a process, as fluid, porous and susceptible to change, influences the representation of many of the locations in these essays, so that even the natural world is depicted as volatile and unstable. The mobility of the people is a key artery in the networks that Stevenson understands as constructing and destabilising place. In addition to exploring how such movements are changing the landscape of the region, the Californian texts are also concerned with how these unsettled places accommodate

and support the various cultural and national identities of the people within them.

Anticipating the work of cultural geographers a century later, Stevenson questions

the easy alliance between place, culture and identity in a mobile, globalised age. In

the writing engendered from his first experience out of Europe, Stevenson presents

the cosmopolitan communities that grow from such global connections and travel,

groups whose collective identity cannot be accommodated by conventional

geographical or cultural categories. Musing on the incompatibility of strict

geographical borders and an increasingly interconnected world, he questions the

viability of nation states. In their place, he articulates a new geographical imaginary,

one based on flexibility and inclusion, offering a conception of national belonging as

open and fluid as the places he depicts.

In Stevenson's essays, just as the natural world mirrors or contributes to the

openness and mutability of place, so does the geographical layout of the city.

Stevenson depicts the uniform and linear design of San Francisco, where 'the streets

lie straight up and down the hills, and straight across at right angles' ('San

Francisco', 185). Walking along this 'trenchant pattern' of roads, 'one brief

impression follows and obliterates another, and the city leaves upon the mind no

general and stable picture, but a profusion of airy and incongruous images' (p. 185).

In comparison to the rhizomatic arrangement of London or Edinburgh, the structured

layout of a young, purpose-built city appears somehow less real and secure; in its

modern design it seems insubstantial, 'airy and incongruous'. The text goes on to

describe 'the great net of thoroughfares lying at right angles […] over the shoulders

of Nob Hill', where 'millionaires are gathered together vying with each other in

display' (p. 186):

> From thence, looking down over the business wards of the city, we can
> descry […] the Stock Exchange, the heart of San Francisco: a great pump we

might call it, continually pumping up the savings of the lower quarters into
the pockets of the millionaires upon the hill. But these same thoroughfares
that enjoy for a while so elegant a destiny have their lines prolonged into
more unpleasant places. Some meet their fate in the sands; some run into the
sea; some perish unwept among pig-sties and rubbish heaps.

Again, the layout of the city reflects the nature of its origins, developing as it did out

of the surge of people and trade brought about by developments in transport and the

discovery of gold. It is industrial capitalism that led to the sudden construction of the

city, and it is the nature of capitalism that is evinced in its layout. The linear

structure of the 'thoroughfares' means that those that begin with the mansions of

'Nob Hill' are the same that end in the 'pig-sties' and 'rubbish heaps' of 'poor,

forgotten districts', revealing the necessary and direct relation between wealth and

poverty in a capitalist society.

This linear layout of San Francisco, however, also supports the integration of

the various different nationalities and cultures that have been drawn to the city.

Reflecting on the cosmopolitan population of San Francisco, Stevenson declares that

almost as 'strange' as 'the rapidity of its appearance, is the mingling of races that

combine to people it' (p. 182): 'The town is essentially not Anglo-Saxon; still more

essentially not American. […] Here, on the contrary, are airs of Marseilles and of

Pekin. The shops along the street are like the consulates of different nations.' Yet,

despite the cultural and national differences of the residents, the composition of this

new, urban environment, in particular 'the indefinite prolongation of its streets' (p.

185), supports multiculturalism and integration:

The same street in its career visits and unites so many different classes of
society […]. Thus you may be struck with a spot, set it down for the most
romantic of the city, and, glancing at the name-plate, find it is in the same
street that you yourself inhabit in another quarter of the town. (pp. 185–86)

One road connects different communities, promoting recognition of a shared, common humanity. Indeed, Stevenson notes that 'for every man […] that city is a foreign city; humming with foreign tongues and customs; […] and yet each and all have made themselves at home' (p. 183).

Through his focus on the enhanced mobility of people in the late nineteenth century, Stevenson presents the expanding networks that connect places across global space as disrupting the old certainties of national identity. This is particularly true of trajectories of migration, and he describes the dissipation of clearly defined nationality among the geographically mobile:

> There is a free or common accent among English-speaking men who follow the sea. They catch a twang in a New England Port; from a cockney skipper even a Scotsman sometimes learns to drop an *h*; a word of a dialect is picked up from another hand in the forecastle; until often the result is undecipherable, and you have to ask for the man's place of birth. (*AE*, 8)

Later in his career, when Stevenson travelled to the 'contact zones' of the Pacific, fluid and ambiguous national identity would become a persistent concern in his texts. Here, we can perceive its origins in his first journey out of Europe, when he is first properly confronted with such peripatetic communities and expansive global networks. In his Californian essays, Stevenson reflects on the cosmopolitanism of the American West:

> In the group of States on the Pacific coast […] we may look to see some singular hybrid […]. In my little restaurant at Monterey, we have sat down to table, day after day, a Frenchman, two Portuguese, an Italian, a Mexican, and a Scotsman: we had for common visitors an American from Illinois, a nearly pure blood Indian woman, and a naturalised Chinese […] No wonder that the Pacific coast is a foreign land to visitors from the Eastern States, for each race contributes something of it its own. ('Monterey', 161)

As Hayward states, in these essays Stevenson 'refuses the easy temptation of asserting Anglo-Saxon racial dominance', offering instead a 'remarkable meditation

on the fast-changing identity of the California coast'.[131] It is the mobility of people,

enabled by the economic and technological developments often termed globalisation,

that Stevenson recognises is creating cosmopolitan communities and changing the

identity of place in America.

Yet more remarkable than his focus on the speed with which the identity of

place can change is Stevenson's suggestion that, in a world constructed of moving

networks, place may not offer a secure support for identity. As the networks

traversing global space expand and the interconnections between places increase, the

notion of bounded places with essential characteristics is increasingly less

persuasive. Cresswell explains that the conception of place as a process, of

'practiced place', 'revises the older ideas of place as the centre of authentic existence

with its own neatly circumscribed culture and identity. As an anti-essentialist notion

is does not allow for any easy correlation of place and culture.'[132] This is not to

suggest that place plays no part in our identification but that this role is less

straightforward than it once was. As David Morely and Kevin Robins explain,

'proliferating information and communication flows' and 'mass human migration

[…] [have] progressively eroded territorial boundaries and provoked ever more

immediate confrontations of culture and identity':

> Where once it was the case that cultures were demarcated and differentiated
> in time and space, now 'the concept of a fixed, unitary, and bounded culture
> must give way to a sense of fluidity and permeability of cultural sets'.
> Through this intermixture and hybridization of cultures, older certainties and
> foundations of identity are continuously and necessarily undermined.'[133]

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[131] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', pp. 257–58.
[132] Cresswell, 'Theorizing Place', p. 26.
[133] Dave Morely and Kevin Robins, 'No Place like Heimat: Images of Home(land) in European
Culture', in *Space and Place*, ed. by Carter, Donald and Squires, pp. 3–32 (p. 5).

If, in an age of global movement and connection, place is continually being reconstituted and remade, then it can be seen instead as a flexible site for the creative production of identity, rather than a homogenous and fixed 'a-priori label of identity'.[134]

It is this idea that Stevenson begins to articulate in his texts from America. As he depicts the assortment of nationalities drawn together by developments in communication, transport and trade, Stevenson formulates imaginary nations of his own to house his cosmopolitan groups of characters. Voyaging across the Atlantic, Stevenson shares a ship with 'Scots and Irish in plenty, a few English, a few Americans, a good handful of Scandinavians, a German or two, and one Russian', this miscellany of nationalities 'all now belonging for ten days to one small iron country on the deep' (*AE,* 10). In 'Simoneau's at Monterey', he writes that a 'friendly synthesis of tongues put everyone at home. We spoke neither English, Spanish nor French; we spoke Simoneaudean, the language of our common country' (p. 174). Just as he notes the dilution of fixed national identity among peripatetic peoples, here Stevenson acknowledges that such global connections and travel creates new communities, whose collective identity cannot be accommodated by the traditional nation state.

Indeed, it is through questioning the relevance of the nation in an era of increasing global mobility and integration that Stevenson articulates his most radical meditation on place and identity. In a passage that seems presciently relevant to the concerns of the twenty-first century, he notes the exclusionary nature of nationalist ideas:

> Of all stupid ill-feelings, the sentiment of my fellow-Caucasians towards our companions in the Chinese car was the most stupid and the worst. They

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[134] Cresswell, 'Theorizing Place', p. 25.

> seemed never to have looked at them, listened to them, or thought of them, but hated them *a priori*. ('ATP', 139)

With an insight that resonates with much of the current rhetoric on immigration, Stevenson recognises that the primary catalyst for this prejudice towards the Chinese is the 'cruel and treacherous battle field of money': 'They could work better and cheaper in half a hundred industries, and hence there was no calumny too idle for the Caucasians to repeat, and even believe'. Such intolerance, Stevenson notes, is not only a concern specific to these circumstances of time and place, but is a pervasive, systemic impediment to global integration, one entrenched in the values of nationhood and national belonging:

> A while ago it was the Irish, now it is the Chinese that must go. Such is the cry. It seems, after all, that no country is bound to submit to immigration any more than to invasion: each is war to the knife, and resistance to either but legitimate defence.
> (p. 139)

Massey and Jess describe the historical opposition to 'the continuous mixing of cultures through the interconnections between places'. They write that it is a reaction against this mixing that has 'resulted in the horrors of ethnic cleansing, the sporadic outbreaks of exclusivist nationalisms and a whole host of jingoistic parochialisms at smaller social and spatial scales.'[135] As the connections between places increase and cultures become more intertwined, Massey posits the need for a readjustment of our understanding of global space and place. She argues that '[t]he alternative to such a reaction might be the imagination and living of a new form of cosmopolitanism – a different kind of geographical imagination.'[136] A century earlier, Stevenson witnessed for the first time the extent of global connectivity in the late nineteenth century, and recognised its destabilising influence on the presumed

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[135] Massey and Jess, 'Introduction', p. 1.
[136] Massey and Jess, 'Introduction', p. 1.

certainties of place and identity. Seeing place as open and permeable, his ideas of

national belonging become fluid, based on a politics of inclusion rather than

exclusion: 'I think we all belong to many countries. And perhaps this habit of much

travel, and the engendering of scattered friendships, may prepare the euthanasia of

ancient nations.' (*SS*, 203) Here, Stevenson articulates the new geographical

imaginary that Massey calls for over a century later: one that does not privilege the

nation state but focuses instead on the networks that construct and connect places,

the social relations that bind us together rather than the geographical boundaries that

keep us apart. He recognises that, in a mobile and interconnected world made up of

permeable places, it is the connections that are important, and deserve our attention.

After travelling 5000 miles to marry an American divorcee, living on writing

sent across the Atlantic to be published in Britain, and meeting countless other

travellers from countless different nations on the way, Stevenson's perception of the

world had changed, leading him to conclude that 'there is no foreign land, it is the

traveller only that is foreign' (*SS*, 229), separating place and identity in a way his

literary friends in London were never able to do. By asserting that 'we all belong to

many nations', the author foretells the problems and injustices of imposing strict

barriers to movement in an entirely interconnected yet unequal world. And in

imagining the 'euthanasia of ancient nations', Stevenson conceives of a time when

the networks that unite us become so numerous, that the boundaries that divide us

will cease to exist.

<p align="center">*</p>

Many scholars have noted the shift in Stevenson's writing after his year in America.

As Hayward asserts, 'not only Stevenson's sympathies and interests, but also his

characteristic themes, style, and literary form, were clearly transformed by his

experiences in the New World'.[137] Yet it was style and form that most interested

contemporary critics and commentators, as opposed to Stevenson's sometimes

radical mediations on identity and location, belonging and displacement. In a review

of 'Across the Plains', the *Scottish Leader* ignored the trials of the journey on the

emigrant train 'to focus on "the author's egotistically gossiping style"', remarking on

'Stevenson's "self-consciousness" with its "deliberate posing".[138] McCracken-

Flesher reads 'the reviewers' obsessive focus on Stevenson's art' as an indication of

his innovation: 'Critics found it hard to accept – perhaps even to register – the

meanings that were erupting through Stevenson's realignments of experience and

self.'[139] It is important to state that Stevenson's year in America did not engender a

sudden or complete transformation of person or literary output. While arguing that,

after his transatlantic journey, Stevenson 'was undoubtedly a changed man',

MacLachlan acknowledges that the author 'was still capable of the kind of writing he

had done before – essays, travelogue and minor fiction'.[140] Equally, the insight

Stevenson achieves in *The Silverado Squatters* is not followed consistently through

his subsequent writing. Throughout his life he identifies as both British and Scottish,

expressing deep, if not uncomplicated affection for his native country. Even as

Stevenson asserts that 'a man belong[s], in these days, to a variety of countries', he

classes 'the old land [as] still the true love'; 'the others are but pleasant infidelities'

(*SS*, 210).

Nevertheless, the impressions that first emerge in Stevenson's writing from

America (the conviction that the world is interconnected, the focus on mobility and

its impact on culture and identity) do persist, and become repeated thematic concerns

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[137] Hayward, '"Foreigner at Home"', p. 261.
[138] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 95.
[139] McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', p. 95.
[140] MacLachlan, 'Introduction', p. xxxiv.

in his writing. Reflecting on the enduring significance of Stevenson's time in California, Hart asserts that 'even after [Stevenson] had formally completed his personal narratives based on his own experiences, the region kept entering and shaping other works'.[141] Yet it was more than just the geographical contours of the landscape that infiltrated the author's imagination after he left America. More significant than the place itself were the changes that he witnessed affecting it, the dynamic forces of modernisation and globalisation that he now perceived to be shaping the world. It was, indeed, a different understanding of the world that Stevenson carried back with him from America, one which would continue to evolve and develop with his own ambitions and experiences. Permeating much of his writing in the following years, this new global sense of place finds its greatest expression after 1888, when Stevenson leaves both Britain and America forever, trading the English-speaking world for the islands of the South Pacific.

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[141] Hart, 'Introduction', p. li.
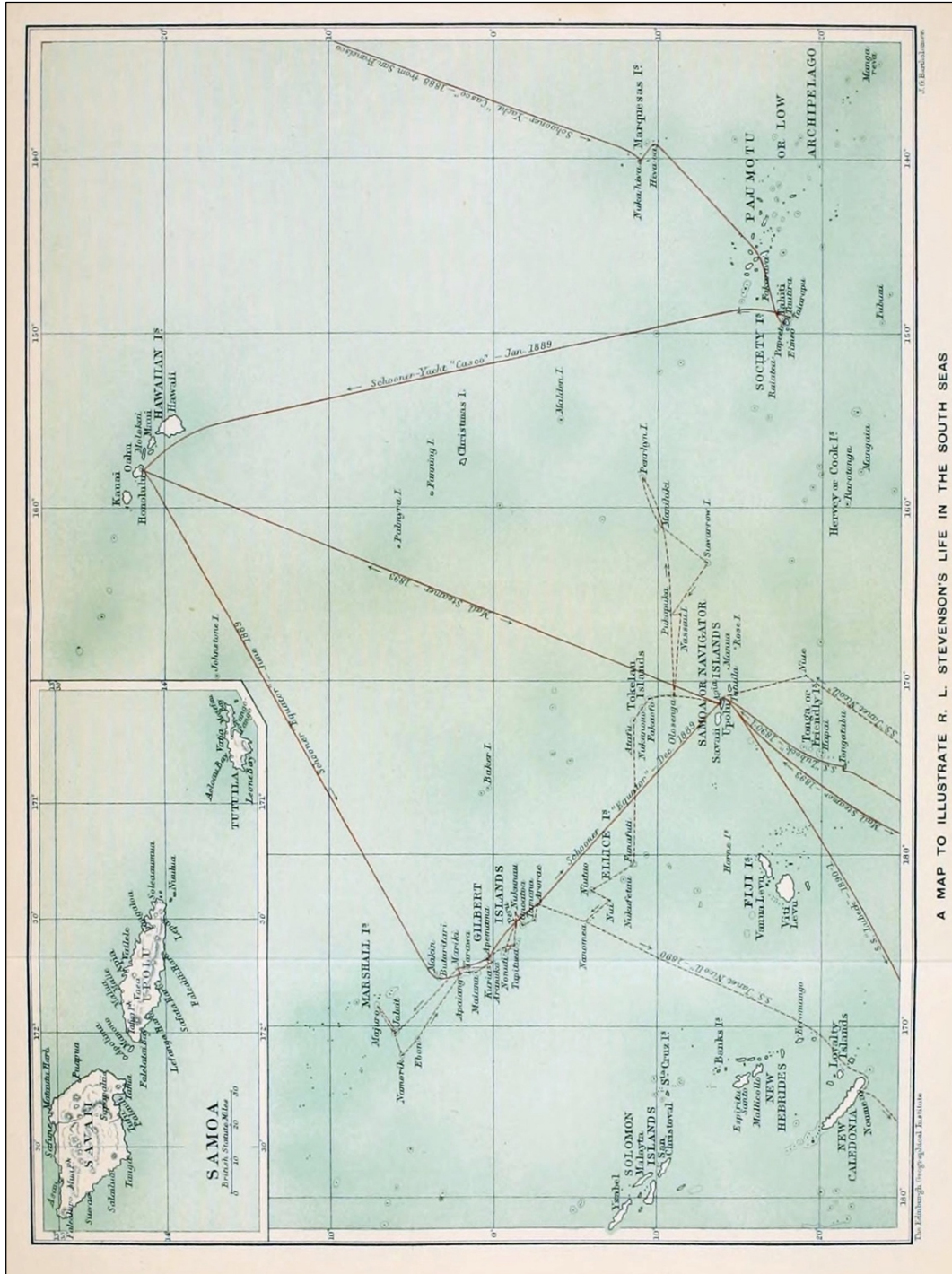
Figure 5. A map illustrating Stevenson's three cruises through the South Seas, 1888–90.

Chapter Three

In the South Seas

On 28 June 1888, Stevenson embarked on the journey which, in a sense, was to be his last. Sailing from San Francisco out into the Pacific, he did not imagine that he was leaving America behind forever, much less that he would never return to Britain, and the familiar scenes of London and Edinburgh. Yet while he was to make frequent further trips throughout the region, visiting many islands and making repeated trips to Sydney, this journey in 1888 was Stevenson's last intercontinental voyage: he lived for the next six years in the islands of the Pacific, and died in 1894 at his home in Samoa. Settling in the South Pacific was not in Stevenson's plan when he boarded the chartered yacht *Casco* with his wife, stepson and mother, departing San Francisco for a six-month cruise around the islands. More likely, it was the letters of travel, commissioned for him to write by Samuel S. McClure, an American specialist in press syndication, that were at the forefront of his mind.[1] McClure recognised the commercial possibilities of Stevenson's journeys in the Pacific, proposing that if the author 'would write a series of articles describing his travels, [he] would syndicate them for enough money to pay the expenses of the trip'.[2] Stevenson kept a journal for this purpose during the first voyage on the *Casco*, which took him through French Polynesia before landing in Hawaii in January 1889, as well as during a second trip on the trading steamer *Equator*, during which he travelled through the atolls of Micronesia from June to December 1889.[3] It was once

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[1] Neil Rennie, 'Introduction', in *ISS*, pp. viii–xxxv (p. viii).
[2] S. S. McClure, *My Autobiography* (London: Murray, 1914), p. 191.
[3] Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 101.

the party had arrived in the Samoan islands that the nature of the trip changed

dramatically. In early January 1890, Stevenson and his wife made the decision to

buy a plot of land in Apia, and only return to Britain to make arrangements for

permanent residence in the Pacific.[4] In fact, Stevenson never left the region again,

but continued to write and publish extensively from his new home Vailima until his

death in December 1894.

In this chapter, I examine the piece of work eventually published as *In the*

South Seas (1896), a record of Stevenson's travels through the islands of the Pacific.

What began as the letters of travel commissioned by McClure quickly transformed

(in Stevenson's eyes at least) into an ambitious book that would consider the history,

cultures and natural landscapes of the South Pacific. As Vanessa Smith notes, it is

clear from the earliest stages that Stevenson 'imagined his project in terms of the

encompassing text of a book rather than the fragmentary text of letters'.[5] Yet the

imaginative transformation of the project involved content as well as form: in

addition to writing what were essentially chapters of a book rather than letters,

Stevenson dispensed with the personal travel narrative that was expected in favour of

anthropological observations and analysis. As I will explore in further detail, this

gulf between Stevenson's ambitions and the expectations of external agents resulted

in one of the most problematic literary productions of the author's career. The new

and ambitious project Stevenson envisaged was not welcomed by his friends, editors

or readers, and the letters were cancelled after only thirty-four of the fifty-two

McClure had commissioned appeared in print.[6] Bombarded with negativity, he

abandoned the book, and it was not until 1894 that he 'wrote to Colvin with an idea

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[4] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. xvi.
[5] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 104.
[6] Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1994), p. 329

"for making a volume out of selections from the South Sea Letters"'.[7] As Roslyn

Jolly asserts, 'this was not a resurrection of the original plan for the book, but

something of a salvage operation',[8] which Sidney Colvin brought to completion in

1896 with the publication of *In the South Seas*, two years after Stevenson's death. It

is in this form that the public finally received Stevenson's 'South Sea book' and,

alongside its contentious production history, it is the letters collected in this volume

that I will discuss in this chapter.

In the previous chapter, I considered how Stevenson's first trip outside of

Europe influenced his perception of place and national identity in the nineteenth

century. Confronted with the proliferating networks of trade and migration that were

reshaping California, Stevenson saw the potential for global unity in the increasing

interconnectedness of place. Following these insights incubated in America by

Stevenson, it might have been expected that in his journey through the Pacific he

would discover what Hsuan Hsu calls 'the transnational, utopian possibilities of the

ocean'.[9] In fact, it is in the Pacific that Stevenson complicates his cosmopolitan

vision with a growing attentiveness to the uneven geographic developments that

have been brought about through imperialism and globalisation. Indeed, if it was

during his first experience of a new continent that Stevenson became focused on the

widening networks of transport and trade that were producing an interconnected

world, it was his second that revealed the imbalance of power and inequalities

inherent in these developments. In this chapter, I begin by examining how Stevenson

critiques the negative effects of Western involvement in the Pacific. While, over the

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[7] Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 60.
[8] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. 60.
[9] Hsuan L. Hsu, *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 153.

past decade, the number of studies taking a postcolonial perspective on Stevenson's

Pacific writing has increased, my focus on *In the South Seas* looks specifically at the

ways in which Stevenson challenges conventions of colonial travel writing, and how

this deviation contributed to the negative reactions its source material received. Yet,

through a focus on its contentious production history, I wish to argue that the conflict

surrounding the text's *form* is also relevant, when considering Stevenson's depiction

and perception of the Pacific. I will suggest that, through his rejection of the

fragmentary form of letters in favour of the encompassing form of a book, Stevenson

attempted a holistic portrayal of the Pacific, one that depicted a region both

connected and expansive, and that continues to challenge the conventional idea of

Pacific islands in the Western cultural imagination.

   Close examination of Stevenson's correspondence reveals that behind many

of the key events of his life is an innate desire for mobility. He attributes restorative

qualities to travel, likening it to the most basic necessities in life. After the prolonged

period of ill health that kept him almost entirely confined to his house in

Bournemouth between 1884 and 1887, it is unsurprising that, in August of that last

year, he expressed joy at finding himself once again crossing the vast space of the

Atlantic: 'there is nothing like being at sea, after all. And O why have I allowed

myself to rot so long on land?' (*Letters*, VI, 5). He reiterated these sentiments less

than a year later when, following the well-documented quarrel and break with W. E.

Henley,[10] he declared: 'I cannot recover from this affair, though crossing the

continent picked me up for a time; and I long to go to sea.' (VI, 200) Travel was the

cure Stevenson chose; at this time in his life, literature seemed to be a secondary

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[10] In March 1888 Henley accused Stevenson's wife, Fanny, of plagiarising work from Stevenson's
cousin, Katharine de Mattos, when she published the short story 'The Nixie' in *Scribner's Magazine*.

concern – the means of facilitating travel rather than the main motivating factor. It is

true that McClure had already arranged syndication of the travel letters: he wrote

from London the month before Stevenson left that he hoped to get $300 per letter

(VI, 200). Yet it is the desire for movement and travel itself to which Stevenson so

often refers in his letters from this time. Far from seeming to travel simply in order

to gather material for the letters, he declared in August 1890:

> These last two years I have been much at sea, and I have *never wearied*,
> sometimes I have indeed grown impatient for some destination; more often I
> was sorry that the voyage drew so early to an end; and never once did I lose
> my fidelity to blue water and a ship. (VI, 403)

Stevenson and his family did indeed travel extensively through the region in

the first years of their stay (see Figure 5, 179). After leaving San Francisco early in

the morning of 28 June 1888, the *Casco*'s first stop was Nukahiva, one of the

Marquesas Islands, annexed by France in 1842.[11] Landing the morning of 20 July

1888, the party spent several weeks here, travelling among the island group and

finally leaving from Hiva Oa on 4 September. Continuing the exploration of French

Polynesia, the *Casco* headed for the islands of the Paumotus (now called Taumotus),

anchoring at Fakarava on 9 September. From here they travelled to Tahiti where

Stevenson fell seriously ill, resulting in a prolonged stay from 27 September until

Christmas Day. After some repairs had been carried out on the *Casco*, she continued

on to Hawaii, and the Stevenson family anchored in Honolulu on 24 January 1889.

They stayed in Hawaii for six months, where Stevenson continued to work on *The

Master of Ballantrae*. He made further brief trips between the islands, including to

the leper colony on the island of Molokai, before on 24 June the family set sail again

on the trading ship *Equator*.[12] For six months, they sailed through the Gilbert Islands

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[11] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. ix.
[12] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. x, xii, xiv.

(now the Republic of Kiribati), spending time in Butaritari and Abemama, finally

disembarking on the Samoan island of Upolu in December 1889. Stevenson worked

on the 'South Seas' material during both of these voyages and continued to do so

during a stay in Sydney and another cruise through the islands on the SS *Janet*

Nicoll, while a temporary residence was built for them on the land they purchased in

Apia, Samoa. Finally, in November 1890, after two months of living in his new

home, Stevenson sent a collection of letters to London to be privately printed as a

copyright edition. This was entitled *The South Seas: A Record of Three Cruises*, and

consisted of the Marquesas material, which he dispatched to New York for

McClure's serialization.[13]

    Yet, as we can gather from Stevenson's correspondence, and as McClure

soon appreciated, the material sent back were not letters in the conventional form,

but rather chapters of a book. Stevenson acknowledges the difference himself,

writing to Colvin in August 1890 after the last cruise on the *Janet Nicoll*: 'I have

done well on that voyage; sixteen letters – at least, not that, but the draught [sic] of

sixteen chapters of my book, from which thirteen or fourteen letters will be selected

– go home to be set up.' (*Letters*, VI, 404) This alteration in form went neither

unnoticed nor undisputed, as I will explore in further detail shortly. Equally striking,

however, was the change to the content: Robert Irwin Hillier notes that Stevenson

felt his experiences in the Pacific could inspire an epic masterpiece, which 'would

encompass history, ethnology, geology, and folklore, rather than the mere collection

of observations and anecdotes on exotica McClure had hired him to write.'[14] In a

letter to Colvin in December 1889, addressed from 'schooner *Equator*, at sea 190

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[13] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 104.
[14] Robert Irwin Hillier, *The South Seas Fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 34.

miles off Samoa', Stevenson declares that his 'book is now practically modelled',

continuing:

> if I can execute what is designed, there are few better books now extant on
> this globe; bar the epics, and the big tragedies, and histories, and the choice
> lyric poetics, and a novel or so – none. […] I propose to call the book – *The
> South Seas*; it is rather a large title, but not many people have seen more of
> them than I […] (*Letters*, VI, 335)

The scale of Stevenson's ambitions for the project is evident here, as is the shift in

focus: it is the entirety of the 'South Seas' that he aims to capture, not simply his

own experiences within them. Oliver Buckton recognises these early ambitions of

the author, describing Stevenson's vision for the book as an 'ethnographic "prose-

epic"', one that 'would undo generations of misrepresentation of Polynesia'.[15]

The anthropological, human science approach is most evident in the initial

sections Stevenson wrote, focusing on the first islands he visited. As well as being

the earliest material sent to McClure, the Marquesan chapters are also the most

strikingly different from the personal letters of travel he was expecting. The chapters

entitled 'Death' and 'Depopulation' consider the environmental and cultural changes

potentially responsible for the dramatic drop in population in the Marquesas,

drawing cross-island comparisons with other parts of the Pacific. There is only a

loose narrative thread through this section, the chapters instead structured

thematically around topics such as systems of government and patterns in Polynesian

languages, with Stevenson as narrator positioned in the objective role of

anthropologist. This more scientific approach to travel writing was not unfamiliar or

innovative in itself. Mary Louise Pratt identifies two events in 1735 that changed the

ways travel narratives were conceived and written: the publication of Carl

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[15] Oliver S. Buckton, *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson: Travel, Narrative, and the Colonial Body*
(Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), p. 152.

Linnaeus's system to classify all the plants and animals of the world, in *Systema Naturae*; and the launching of the first scientific expedition to establish the shape of the earth. After these landmark events, Pratt argues that 'travel and travel writing would never be the same again. In the second half of the eighteenth century, whether or not an expedition was primarily scientific, or the traveller a scientist, natural history played a part in it.'[16] Far from being unusual when Stevenson began to write on the Pacific, Pratt suggests that 'this naturalist narrative was to continue to hold enormous ideological force throughout the nineteenth century, and remains very much with us today.'[17]

Nonetheless, for editors and readers accustomed to the Robert Louis Stevenson of *Treasure Island* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, this objective approach came as an unwelcome surprise. It was autobiography and adventure that were expected from the now famous author, not ethnography. As a well-known British figure travelling to what was seen by many as an 'outpost of empire', further disappointment may have been drawn from Stevenson's failure to reaffirm the imperial mission. Helen Carr explains that 'the period from 1880 to 1940 was the heyday of the British Empire, and much travel writing shows the complicity with imperialism – if not its outright support'.[18] Stevenson, however, critiques the impact of Western involvement in the Pacific, perceiving 'questions of race and civilisation at every step' (*Letters*, VI, 213). As I will consider in more detail shortly, the history of European contact with the Pacific is not coterminous with the history of colonialism.

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[16] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 26.
[17] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 28.
[18] Helen Carr, 'Modernism and Travel (1880–1940)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 70-86 (p. 71).

By 1888, however, the region had become 'a vast contact zone':[19] as Jolly observes, 'ancient modes of life existed side by side with the most modern technology', creating 'the realm of the hybrid and the dialogic, of an intense and productive transculturation.'[20] Whereas in the US Stevenson saw the widening networks of transport and trade as producing a cosmopolitan, interconnected world that could bring humanity closer together, in the Pacific he became aware of the unevenness of these developments, which were creating regions 'differentiated by wealth, mobility, power, and race'.[21]

It is important not to romanticise Stevenson's writing. His awareness of the complex issues affecting the region developed the longer he was there, and we cannot ignore the moments early in the text where he aligns himself with colonial values: he describes the first islanders he meets as 'barbarous and knived', and one in particular 'as something bestial' (*ISS*, 8). Nor should we overlook the role of travel writing as a genre involved in the discursive formation of Empire: as Edward Said argues, travel writing 'brought to a basically insular and provincial British audience the color, glamour, and romance of the British overseas enterprise.'[22] I will argue, however, that, in *In the South Seas*, Stevenson subverts the conventions of the colonial travel writing genre. Linked to his desire for objective authenticity in his writing on the South Seas, he removes himself from the narrative, preferring to focus on the cultural practices of the islands than his adventures within them. This determination for objectivity distances his work from the other style of travel writing that became popular in the late eighteenth century: 'the kind of writing that

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[19] Pratt defines 'contact zones' as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' (*Imperial Eyes*, p. 7).

[20] Roslyn Jolly, 'Stevenson and the Pacific', in *EC*, pp. 118–33 (pp. 120, 121).

[21] Hsu, *Geography and the Production of Space*, p. 131.

[22] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 160.

foregrounds the narrator in an attempt to sentimentalize and/or glorify the narrator's experiences in hostile environments'.[23] As Pratt explains, such sentimental literature encouraged the domestic subject of Empire to 'identify with expansion in a new way, through empathy with individual victim-heroes and heroines'.[24] Yet Stevenson goes further in undermining colonial travel writing than just denying the reader an empathetic narrator. Indeed, rather than simply absenting himself from the narrative, at times Stevenson actively works against it, undermining his own observations and authority, and subverting the positions of observer/observed, subject/object. This subversion of the observing author and the anthropological object is epitomised in Stevenson's relationship with King Tem Binoka of Abemama, under whose gaze Stevenson found himself to be 'the subject of a constant study' (*ISS*, 217). Indeed, the authority of imperial surveillance is questioned and eventually relinquished by the text, as Stevenson and his family become as much objects of study as the Pacific islanders. Unfortunately, it was precisely this unobtrusive, somewhat nebulous narrative presence that most disappointed Stevenson's readers, alongside his unflinching depiction of the issues affecting modern life in the Pacific.

As Jolly observes, then, in *In the South Seas*, 'two kinds of disappointment combine to confound the reader's expectation of what both a *Stevenson* travel book and a *Pacific* travel book ought to be': it provides anthropology over adventure, colonial critique over romantic exoticism.[25] Yet, as I have already mentioned, it was not just the content but also the form of the text that created conflict. Although commissioned to write fifty-two individual letters of travel, Stevenson quickly began

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[23] Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 13.
[24] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 85.
[25] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. 62.

to view the material he was producing in terms of an all-encompassing book.

Writing from sea in February 1890, he told his publisher Edward Burlingame:

> The travel letters (fifty of them) are already contracted for in papers; these I was quite bound to let McClure handle, as the idea was of his suggestion […] Of course the fifty newspaper letters will be simply patches chosen from the travel volume (or volumes) as it gets written. (*Letters*, VI, 366)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the newspaper editors printing the 'letters' were far from satisfied with the 'patches' they received. McClure told Stevenson of the protests he had received from the editors of the *New York Sun*: 'the letters did not come as letters are supposed to come. They were not a correspondence from the South Seas, they were not dated and […] in no way did the matter […] fulfil the definition of the word "'letter"'.[26] Colvin reiterated these remarks in a letter to Charles Baxter, telling him the material was not what the editors asked for: 'that is to say, not letters of incident and experience, hot and hot from the scenes described, but only the advance sheets of a book, and rather a dull book at that.'[27]

I wish to contend, however, that Stevenson's rejection of the epistolary form is significant to how we read his representation of the Pacific. Drawing on concepts from anthropology and island studies, I will demonstrate that his determination to depict his experiences and observations in the completeness and coherence of a book reveals a way of perceiving the Pacific that differed from the conventional Western understanding of the region. In particular, I am drawing on Epeli Hau'ofa's argument, which begins by asserting that 'there is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific' as 'islands in a far sea' and as 'a sea of islands'.[28] Through his

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[26] S. S. McClure to Stevenson, quoted in Peter Lyon, *Success Story: The Life and Times of S. S. McClure* (New York: Scribner's, 1963), p. 106.
[27] Sidney Colvin to Charles Baxter, quoted in Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 104.
[28] Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1993), p. 7.

comparative approach, which privileges a thematic structure over a chronological

narrative, Stevenson reveals a holistic view of the Pacific, presenting it as a sea of

interconnected islands, rather than individual, isolated islands in a far sea. As I will

demonstrate, it was his determination not to present the islands as separate, but rather

to explore them in the totality of their relationships, which led Stevenson so quickly

to discard the idea of letters, his conception of the project shifting in line with his

understanding of the Pacific. He was still obligated, however, to fulfil his

serialisation deal with McClure, however much it interfered with his ultimate literary

objective.

   The South Seas letters began publication in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) on

24 January 1891 and the *Auckland Star* the following week, slightly earlier than their

publication in the *New York Sun* from 1 February and in *Black and White* (London)

from 6 February (*Letters*, VII, 68). They were published, however, for a reduced

rate, and were eventually cancelled after only thirty-four of them had appeared in

print.[29] Colvin explained that *Black and White* found the Letters 'too monotonous',

eventually 'tucking them into corners, reducing the number and size of their artist's

illustrations, and stopping at Hawaii, never even reaching the Gilberts'.[30] Following

the failure of the letters, Stevenson also gave up on the ambitious project of the

book, so that *In the South Seas* was collected together for the first time, in volume

form, by Colvin in 1896, two years after the author's death, as part of his Edinburgh

Edition of the author's works. Colvin explained in his introduction that the Hawaiian

chapters had been omitted as they were not to Stevenson's 'own satisfaction'.[31] The

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[29] McLynn, *Stevenson: A Biography*, p. 329
[30] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. xxv.
[31] Sidney Colvin, 'Editorial Note', in *In the South Seas*, Edinburgh Edition, XX (Edinburgh, 1896), x.

Marquesas, Paumotus, and Gilberts chapters were all included, however, and make up the Pacific travel writings of Robert Louis Stevenson that we know today.

Anthropology and the Absent Author

By the time Stevenson arrived in the Pacific in 1888, the region consisted of clearly defined states and territories. As Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith explain, historically, the Pacific

> was a large world in which people and cultures moved and mingled, trading and extending social networks through marriage and other forms of alliance. The so-called boundaries of islands were points of exit and entry rather than frontiers, and the sea was open to anyone who could navigate.[32]

It was nineteenth-century imperialism that erected the boundaries leading 'to a contraction of these worlds, imposing the threefold division of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia'.[33] Cook claimed Australia for Britain in 1770, and by 1788 the first penal colony in the country was founded, while whalers and traders started traversing the Pacific islands.[34] It was owing to the increasing numbers of whalers, traders and missionaries crossing the Tasman Sea that New Zealand was annexed in 1840.[35]

    Yet British involvement in the Pacific was not driven by straightforward imperial expansion. In fact, it was an *unofficial* British presence that had the most profound impact in the Pacific islands. As Richard Fulton explains:

> Whalers and trading vessels led to shipwrecks and desertions; the prison colony led to escapes. In the last 15 years or so of the eighteenth century,

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[32] Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (eds), 'Introduction', in *Islands in History and Representation* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1–18 (p. 9).
[33] Edmond and Smith, 'Introduction', p. 10.
[34] Richard D. Fulton and Peter H. Hoffenberg (eds), 'Introduction', in *Oceania and the Victorian Imagination: Where All Things Are Possible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1–10 (p. 6).
[35] David McIntyre, *Winding up the British Empire in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 8.

desperate men and desperadoes found refuge on the islands of the South Pacific and became 'beachcombers'.[36]

The British government itself was reluctant to take on the responsibility of colonial administration, turning down repeated 'offers of protectorates and other opportunities to colonize Pacific lands'.[37] Yet the acts of 'private colonisation' and 'quasi-colonialist activities' by British subjects – missionaries, traders, settlers, beachcombers – eventually forced the London government to alter its imperial policy, as did pressure from the colonial governments of Australia and New Zealand. Abuses by labour recruiters in particular, who were known to take men from their home islands without consent, forced the British authorities to take action. Alternative strategies were trialled in order to control British subjects, such as appointing the Governor of Fiji as High Commissioner, giving him jurisdiction over British subjects in other islands, reporting to the Foreign Office. This action, however, proved ineffectual, and, other than the annexation of Fiji in 1874, territorial expansion began in earnest in the latter half of the 1880s.[38]

Such was the political environment that Stevenson entered when he sailed to the Pacific islands in 1888. A Western presence in the region had long been felt through the quasi-colonial actions of missionaries, traders and beachcombers. Following the interest in globalisation that Stevenson developed during his first trip to America, this Western influence in the Pacific, and the changes it produced, became a key focus in the author's writing. As such, Stevenson depicts the islands, not as remote, tropical paradises suspended in a vast ocean, but as connected parts of

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[36] Fulton and Hoffenberg, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[37] Roslyn Jolly, 'Piracy, Slavery, and the Imagination of Empire in Stevenson's Pacific Fiction', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 35.1 (2007), 157–73 (p. 157).
[38] Jolly, 'Piracy', p. 157.

an integrated world system. Writing about a Hawaiian native who left the island

many years ago, Stevenson asks:

> I wonder what he would think if he could be carried there indeed, and see the
> modern town of Honolulu brisk with traffic […]; or what he would think to
> see the brown faces grown so few and the white so many; and his father's
> land sold for planting sugar, and his father's house quite perished, or perhaps
> the last of them struck leprous and immured between the surf and the cliffs of
> Molokai. (*ISS*, 20–21).

The author reflects on the changes that have occurred in Hawaii since its island

borders were infiltrated by the forces of globalisation and the presence of American

missionaries and plantation owners. In the scholarly field of island studies, the

concept of 'the edge', of an island's borders and boundaries, has been one of the

discipline's central topics of discussion. Pete Hay explains that 'the notion of the

edge is central to constructions of islandness'; yet, as Hay goes on to identify,

'paradigms of hard-edgedness and a consequent insularity are no longer much in

favour within island studies'.[39] Instead, the majority of island scholars perceive the

sea (in some ways the most fluid of borderlines) to be a mobile and permeable

boundary. Hay explains that 'islands must trade if they are to overcome the

constraints of a small or non-existent hinterland', concluding that 'connectedness

describes the island condition better than isolation'.[40] It is this conception of

islandness to which Stevenson subscribes in *In the South Seas*, recognising yet

regretting the permeability of the island border when he concludes: 'so simply, even

in the South Sea Islands, and so sadly, the changes come' (p. 21).

Although Stevenson does not devote a great deal of the text to examining the

white population of the Pacific, he is certainly interested in the influence they have

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[39] Pete Hay, 'A Phenomenology of Islands', *Island Studies Journal*, 1.1 (2006), 19–42 (pp. 21, 22).
[40] Hay, 'Phenomenology of Islands', p. 23.

had on the region. When the text does reference them directly, it loosely prefigures the scathing depictions of traders and beachcombers in Stevenson's later South Seas fiction (such as 'The Beach of Falesà' (1892) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1894)). In the first few pages of *In the South Seas*, Stevenson declares that 'not only is Polynesian easy to smatter, but interpreters abound', as 'missionaries, traders and broken white folk living on the bounty of natives, are to be found in almost every isle and hamlet' (p. 10). It is 'broken white folk' who occupy so much of the author's Pacific fiction; writing to Colvin about 'The Beach of Falesà', Stevenson says 'all that is ugly is in the whites' (*Letters*, VII, 282). Yet his interest in language is also significant: he continues to write that, even when the translators

> are unserviceable, the natives themselves have often scraped up a little English […], or an efficient pidgin, what is called to the westward 'Beach la Mar', comes easy to the Polynesian; it is now taught, besides, in the schools of Hawaii, and from the multiplicity of British ships, and the nearness of the States on the one hand and the colonies on the other, it may be called, and will almost certainly become, the tongue of the Pacific. (*ISS*, 10)

For Stevenson, language was one indicator of the globalising forces spreading through the Pacific. The lingua franca he identifies is a far more pervasive, formal version of the 'Simoneaudean' he spoke with an assortment of nationalities in California. He identifies the hierarchies of power contributing to the adoption of this pidgin, suggesting that the Polynesian languages will struggle to endure against the might of 'the states', 'the colonies', and the 'multiplicity of British ships'. Yet here Stevenson is too emphatic in his prediction: John Mack explains that the widespread adoption of the language was 'more or less limited to Melanesia, in which it is the basis of Bislama, a pidgin language spoken in Vanuatu.'[41]

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[41] John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), p. 20.

Stevenson, then, resists the temptation to depict remote, exotic islands, and instead situates them within the systems of late nineteenth-century globalisation. Yet there seems to remain a desire among scholars to see such romanticised images in Stevenson's work. Carla Manfredi suggests that Stevenson views the Pacific as 'colorful, flowing and heartbreakingly sensual, but simultaneously obscure, fixed and congealed in time'. She argues that, for Stevenson, the region is 'fossilized, outside of time and space, by a "prehistoric emptiness" in which "life appeared to stand stock-still, and the sense of isolation was profound and refreshing".'[42] Selecting examples from the text that refer to specific, isolated moments within Stevenson's extensive experience of the Pacific, Manfredi overlooks the long passages (and even chapters) dedicated to the changes brought about through colonialism and globalisation. Even when describing his stay with King Tem Binoka in Abemama, one of the islands least affected by Western intrusion, Stevenson designates it 'the last erect vestige of a dead society' (*ISS*, 209). H. E. Maud explains how 'in the face of European cultural pressures that had overrun the whole of Polynesia and Micronesia', the rulers of Abemama 'had maintained the political, economic, and social integrity of their territory from the beginnings of European contact to virtually the end of the nineteenth century'.[43]

Stevenson does recognise Abemama as markedly different to other islands, declaring that 'the white man is everywhere else, building his houses, drinking his gin, getting in and out of trouble with the weak native governments' (p. 209). Yet while he acknowledges that he 'came in a happy moment to see its institutions still

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[42] Carla Manfredi, 'Pacific Phantasmagorias: Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific Photography', in *Oceania and the Victorian Imagination*, ed. by Fulton and Hoffenberg, pp. 11–30 (p. 29).

[43] H. E. Maud, 'Baiteke and Binoka of Abemama: Arbiters of Change in the Gilbert Islands', in *Pacific Islands Portraits*, ed. by J. W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), pp. 201–24 (p. 223).

erect', Stevenson perceives the fragility of this episode of cultural preservation, writing that, 'in the last decade', even in Abemama 'many changes have crept in', predicting it will take just 'ten years more, and the old society will have entirely vanished' (p. 156). Contrary to the idea that Stevenson's Pacific is 'congealed in time', 'fossilized, outside of time and space', I would argue that the places and the conditions he depicts are precisely and determinedly situated in the time of writing, caught up in flux rather than stasis. Indeed, Stevenson himself acknowledged the unique moment in Pacific history that he had captured; in a letter in 1894, four years after his visit, he described the Abemema material as 'a real curiosity, a thing that can never be seen again, now the group is annexed and Tembinoka dead' (*Letters*, VIII, 344).

Depopulation is a key focus in the examination by *In the South Seas* of Western intrusion in the Pacific. In the Marquesas section, for example, Stevenson devotes an entire chapter to the topic, examining the case of 'the tribe of Hapaa', which was

> said to have numbered some four hundred, when the smallpox came and reduced them by one-forth. Six months later a woman developed tubercular consumption; the disease spread like a fire about the valley, and in less than a year two survivors, a man and a woman, fled from that new-created solitude. (*ISS*, 23)

David Farrier argues that this section conforms to 'what Patrick Brantlinger has called an "extinction discourse" which, from the late eighteenth century onwards, preoccupied many writers about "other" cultures, and which described "the inevitable disappearance of some or all primitive races".'[44] Yet Stevenson's approach is more investigatory than this appraisal allows: as well as being the

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[44] David Farrier, *Unsettled Narratives: The Pacific Writings of Stevenson, Ellis, Melville and London* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), p. 16.

section most concerned with 'questions of race and civilisation' (*Letters*, VI, 213),

the fifteen chapters of the Marquesas are the most ambitious in their thematic,

ethnographic approach. Rather than limit himself to discussing this island group

alone for the sake of a chronological narrative, Stevenson includes various examples

from many other parts of the Pacific in his consideration of depopulation, worth

quoting at length:

> To-day in the Marquesas, in the Eight Islands of Hawaii, in Mangareva, in
> Easter Island, we find the same race perishing like flies. Why this change?
> Or, grant that the coming of the whites, the change of habits, and the
> introduction of new maladies and vices, fully explain the depopulation, why
> is that depopulation not universal? The population of Tahiti, after a period of
> alarming decrease, has again become stationary. I hear of a similar result
> among some Maori tribes; in many of the Paumotus a slight increase is to be
> observed; and the Samoans are today as healthy and at least as fruitful as
> before the change. Grant that the Tahitians, the Maoris, and the Paumotuans
> have become inured to the new conditions; and what are we to make of the
> Samoans, who have never suffered? (*ISS*, 31)

As opposed to simply assuming depopulation is 'inevitable', Stevenson

employs his anthropological, comparative approach to consider the actual effect of

Western involvement in the region. Rather scathingly declaring that 'those who are

acquainted only with a single group are apt to be ready with solutions' (p. 33), the

conclusion he reaches is drawn from his own in-depth observations of life on

different islands:

> Upon the whole, the problem seems to me to stand thus: – Where there have
> been fewest changes, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful, there the
> race survives. Where there have been most, important or unimportant,
> salutary or hurtful, there it perishes. (p. 33)

As Julia Reid proposes, 'although Stevenson's analysis draws on conventional

images of the dying race, it is also rooted in a Darwinian understanding of the

necessarily gradual pace at which societies naturally evolve and change'.[45] It is not

outright violence that he sees to be the root of depopulation in the Pacific, but the

sudden 'modernisation' of island cultures, concluding that 'change of habit' is

'bloodier than a bombardment' (*ISS*, 34).

In addition to applying a comparative approach to his experience of different

islands, Stevenson turns his ethnographic gaze on the behaviour of white people in

the Pacific. Again, in the chapters on the Marquesas Islands, he explores the

traditional Polynesian concept of 'tapu', which denotes something holy with spiritual

restriction or prohibition, often employed as a way to enforce rules in island

societies. He explains that, in the Pacific, 'not only are the whites exempt from [the]

consequences' of breaking tapus, 'but their transgressions seem to be viewed without

horror' (p. 42). Stevenson contrasts this tolerance with the 'civilising mission' often

inherent in colonialism, asserting that 'all the world must respect our *tapus*, or we

gnash our teeth'. This hypocrisy is exemplified in the imprisonment of a Polynesian

man by the French colonial government in Hiva Oa:

> He had levelled up a piece of the graveyard [...] and declared he had no
> thought of doing wrong. Why should he? He had been forced at the point of
> the bayonet to destroy the sacred places of his own piety; when he had
> recoiled from the task, he had been jeered at for a superstitious fool. And
> now it is supposed he will respect our European superstitions as if by second
> nature. (p. 96)

Sylvie Largeaud-Ortega describes Stevenson as 'an acute anthropologist practicing

hands-on "participating observation"', who is subsequently 'able to assess the actual

effect of Western presence in the islands'.[46] Through the comparative model that he

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[45] Julia Reid, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and the "Romance of Anthropology"', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 10.1 (2005), 46–71 (p. 58).
[46] Sylvi Largeaud-Ortega, 'Who's Who in "The Isle of Voices"? How Victorian Robert Louis Stevenson Viewed Pacific Islanders' Perceptions of Victorians and of Themselves', in *Oceania and the Victorian Imagination*, ed. by Fulton and Hoffenberg, pp. 93-105 (p. 93).

applies, he includes colonial governments and Western behaviour in the analysis, making white people in the Pacific as much anthropological subjects as the indigenous population. Indeed, by extending the comparison to British society, Stevenson refutes traditional oppositions between 'primitive' and 'civilised' societies, acknowledging that while there may be 'barbarous islanders' in the Pacific, he has also passed 'through Soho, and seen that which cured [him] of [his] dinner' (*ISS*, 180).

Conscious, then, of the damaging effects of Western involvement in the Pacific, Stevenson was required to reconcile this awareness with his own contribution to the forces that were globalising the South Seas. Traveling to and writing from the Pacific, Stevenson utilised the networks of transport and communication that were enabling the changes he denounces. It was a trading ship (the *Equator*) that Stevenson and his family boarded on their second cruise around the islands, while the regularity of monthly mail steamers was one of the key reasons they chose to settle in Samoa. Not only this, but his writing provided information about the region to the reading publics of Britain and America, potentially drawing more interest and more travellers to the Pacific. He acknowledges the ability of literature to exert such an influence, describing a 'Mr McCallum' who

> had read of the South Seas; loved to read of them; and let their image fasten in his heart: till at length he could refrain no longer – must set forth, a new Rudel, for that unseen homeland – and has now dwelt for years in Hiva-oa, and will lay his bones there in the end with full content. (p. 87)

Not satisfied with just one such example, Stevenson goes on to describe a man he met on board a ship 'who sailed upon that voyage, his first time to sea, for the mere love of Samoa'. He explains that 'it was a few letters in a newspaper that sent him on

that pilgrimage' – the same form in which the public were to first receive

Stevenson's own writing about the region.

Yet, rather than making him question whether he should refrain from such

writing, this awareness of the power of literature drives Stevenson to dedicate

considerable space and energy to correcting previous misrepresentations of the

Pacific. In particular, *In the South Seas* works to discredit 'the myth of the South

Seas as a paradise of sexual license'.[47] Rod Edmond describes the eighteenth-century

'typification' of the 'sensual [...] Polynesian', an image that persisted in the

Victorian era when 'the sexualization of Polynesian cultures' became 'moralized

rather than celebrated'.[48] Yet, as Ralph Parfect notes, 'in spite of some glimpses of

naked women in the text, Stevenson pays little attention to sexual themes'; on the

occasions that he does, it is to contradict rather than affirm conventional images of

intense sensuality and sexual freedom.[49] Acknowledging the region's reputation as a

'"paradise of naked women" for the resident whites', he reveals that, in many

islands, it is a 'platonic Paradise, where Lothario venture[s] at his peril' (*ISS*, 199).

He describes an island in Kiribati where 'fourteen whites have perished [...] all for

the same cause, all found where they had no business, and speared by some

indignant father of the family'. Even in the chapter entitled 'The Palace of Many

Women', which examines the king of Abemama's exclusively female court, he

declares the situation purely 'platonic', without doubt 'a household unlike [...] one of

ours', but 'more unlike still to the Oriental harem' (pp. 222, 224). Rather than

portraying the South Seas as the licentious antithesis to Victorian Britain, in Kiribati

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[47] Ralph Parfect, 'Violence in the South Seas: Stevenson, the Eye, and Desire', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 190–98 (p. 196).
[48] Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, p. 9.
[49] Parfect, 'Violence in the South Seas', p. 196.

(or the Gilbert Islands) Stevenson depicts a culture with equally firm codes of conduct, an 'archipelago of fierce husbands and virtuous women' (p. 200).

Of course, before travelling to the Pacific, Stevenson himself had been influenced by literary portrayals of the region. On the first page of *In the South Seas*, he writes of being 'among scenes that had attracted [him] in youth and health' (p. 5). He might be referring to *The Coral Island* (1858) by R. M. Ballantyne, of which he declared himself an admirer at fifteen years old.[50] He had also met Charles Warren Stoddard during his first trip to San Francisco, who introduced him to the Pacific writings of Herman Melville, and who had himself travelled in the South Seas.[51] Indeed, Lloyd Osbourne recalls how, just months before they departed on the *Casco*, both he and Stevenson pored over A. G. Findlay's *Directory for the Navigation of the South Pacific Ocean* (1851).[52] In light of his extensive reading, Vanessa Smith suggests that Stevenson chose 'the mediation of theory' over 'the immediacy of encounter, his first-hand authority becoming dissipated in his willingness to defer to prior texts.'[53]

Yet throughout *In the South Seas*, Stevenson's references to other texts and authors are more often intended to criticise or contradict them. A pamphlet, the author of which he declines to name, declares 'that the Marquesan especially

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[50] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. ix.
The Coral Island (1858) is a work of juvenile fiction by Scottish author R. M. Ballantyne, and follows the adventures of three boys marooned after a shipwreck on a South Pacific island.
[51] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 110.
Charles Warren Stoddard visited the Pacific a number of times, the first in 1864, and wrote books from his travels including *South-Sea Idyls* (1873) and *A Trip to Hawaii* (1885).
Herman Melville worked at sea between 1839–44 and also wrote books from his experiences. His first book *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1845) is loosely based on his stay at Nuka Hiva in the Marquesas. *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (1847) was also drawn from his experiences in the Pacific, although both were subject to liberal imaginative reconstructions and addition of material from other sources. See Herbert, T. Walter, *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 159.
[52] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. ix.
[53] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 105.

resembles the Paumotuan': Stevenson argues 'the two races' are the very 'extremes

of Polynesian diversity' (*ISS*, 127). He claims 'there are but two writers who have

touched the South Seas with any genius', Stoddard and Melville, yet deplores the

latter's 'grotesque misspelling' of Pacific place names (p. 23). Indeed, while

suggesting that 'readers of travels may […] declare themselves better informed',

Stevenson asserts his preference for 'the statement of an intelligent native' over 'the

report of the most honest traveller', describing the process by which he believes

many travel books are written:

> A ship of war comes to haven, anchors, lands a party, receives and returns a
> visit, and the captain writes a chapter on the manners of the island. It is not
> considered what class is mostly seen. Yet we should not be pleased if a
> Lascar foremast hand were to judge England by the ladies who parade
> Ratcliffe Highway. (p. 35)

By reversing the roles of author and subject, Stevenson underlines the absurdity of

making authoritative pronouncements on an entire population, condemning what he

calls 'the common, ignorant habit of regarding races in a lump' (p. 60).

Yet it is not only through his contradiction and correction of other reports

that Stevenson undermines past examples of writing on the Pacific. In fact, it is

through precisely this technique of role reversal seen in the passage above that *In the

South Seas* most clearly subverts the conventions of colonial travel writing. One key

aspect of this reversal is 'the gaze'. The idea of 'seeing equalling knowledge' has

long been a tradition in travel literature;[54] Pratt terms it the 'monarch-of-all-I-survey'

convention, where writers view other cultures through authoritative 'imperial

eyes'.[55] Stevenson is not innocent in this regard, describing how the letters of travel

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[54] Kristi Siegel and Toni B. Wulff, 'Travel as Spectacle', in *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire,
Spectacle, and Displacement*, ed. by Kristi Siegel (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 109–22 (p.
112).
[55] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 201.

require him 'to go about and see, and then come home and note, the strangeness all

around' (*Letters*, VI, 206). Yet at various points in his travel text it is Stevenson

himself who becomes the object of scrutiny. During his first contact with the

inhabitants of Nuka-Hiva, Stevenson is subjected to the gaze of their 'embarrassing

eyes', sitting 'there helpless under all these staring orbs, [...] blocked in a corner of

[his] cabin' (*ISS*, 9). He feels 'a kind of despair', as the prerogative of surveillance –

traditionally, the domain of the imperial author – is taken by his guests. On another

occasion, he recalls feeling a 'sense of isolation that was profound and refreshing',

until the wind

> scattered the fans of the palms above the den; and behold! In two of the tops
> there sat a native, motionless as an idol and watching us, you would have
> said, without a wink. This discovery of human presences latent overhead in a
> place where we had supposed ourselves alone, […] and the thought that
> perhaps at all hours we were similarly supervised, struck us with a chill. Talk
> languished on the beach. (pp. 19–20)

According to Bill Ashcroft, et al., 'one of the most powerful strategies of imperial

dominance is that of surveillance, or observation', which 'suggests the power to

process and understand that which is seen, and it objectifies and interpellates the

colonized subject'; as such, it 'is a regular feature of exploration and travel

writing'.[56] In *In the South Seas*, Stevenson subverts this traditional dichotomy of

observer and observed, simultaneously reversing the role of author and subject

whilst disrupting imperial hierarchies of dominance.

Nowhere is this subversion of the 'seeing author' and the anthropological

subject more overt than in Stevenson's relationship with King Tem Binoka of

Abemama. When the *Equator* arrives at the island, the passengers cannot disembark

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[56] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd
edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 207, 208.

until Tem Binoka consents to their presence. While awaiting this approval they are

'the subject of a constant study':

> he took us in series and fixed upon each, for near a minute at a time, the same
> hard and thoughtful stare. As he thus looked he seemed to forget himself, the
> subject and the company, and to become absorbed in the process of his
> thought; the look wholly impersonal: I have seen the same in the eyes of
> portrait-painters. (*ISS*, 217–18)

Tem Binoka is positioned as a painter in his attempt to capture and understand the

foreigners, an active, creative role not far from that of author. His 'eye' is 'brilliant,

imperious, and inquiring' as it is turned on the author and his family (p. 211); yet it

is not only the gaze that the king subverts in his relationship with Stevenson. As he

considers whether to allow the author access to his island, he takes the prerogative of

extracting information and experience from the 'other' culture and race. Stevenson

writes:

> The second day had come to its maturity before I was informed abruptly that
> I had stood the ordeal. […] it was by our talk that we gained admission to the
> island; the king promising himself (and I believe really amassing) a vast
> amount of useful knowledge ere we left. (p. 218)

Paul Smethurst explains how 'imperialist discourse was built on a system of

ideologically-informed asymmetrical relationships', and that, in 'the context of travel

and travel writing, the most significant of these were traveler/travelee,

observer/observed, narrator/narrated'.[57] In Stevenson's depiction of his first contact

with King Tem Binoka, these dichotomies become blurred. While he remains the

narrator of his own text, he is also positioned as the exotic subject of scrutiny,

becoming as much a curiosity to be studied and exploited by Tem Binoka, as the

king is for *In the South Seas*.

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[57] Paul Smethurst, 'Introduction', in *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*, ed. by Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–18 (p. 1).

Indeed, while there is only ever one narrator of *In the South Seas*, he cannot

be relied upon to affirm his own authority. Just as he attempts an objective, truthful

depiction of what he perceives in the Pacific, Stevenson gestures to the impossibility

of such a feat, undermining his own narration, alongside an entire corpus of travel

writing that attempts to 'reveal' foreign lands. When describing his conversation

with islanders about their customs and beliefs, he writes: 'Of one thing, besides, I

may be sure: Let me indulge it as I please, I shall not hear the whole; for he is

already on his guard with me, and the amount of lore is boundless' (*ISS*, 140). Rather

than making an authoritative pronouncement, or demonstrating an infallible

technique for extracting information, Stevenson acknowledges the limitations of his

position as outsider and observer, recognising the islanders' agency in withholding

information. Indeed, he goes further to question who is actually in control of the

information being relayed: himself or the indigenous population. Early in the text,

Stevenson describes his role as 'showman of the *Casco*' and the admiration she

inspired: 'The men fathomed out her dimensions with their arms […]; the women

declared the cabins more lovely than a church; […]; and I have seen one lady strip

up her dress, and, with wonder and delight, rub herself bare-breeched upon the

velvet cushions' (p. 11). Smith explains that Stevenson here 'reiterates the scenario,

familiar from literature of first contact, of natives lost in wonderment at a superior

material culture'.[58] Yet, on the final page of the Marquesan chapters, Stevenson

rethinks this initial assessment of the islanders' behaviour. Describing his relations

with Moipu, a former chief in Hiva Oa, Stevenson begins to consider whether 'what

seemed childishness may have been rather courtly art':

> His manners stuck me as above the mark; they were refined and caressing
> […], and when I think of the serene absent-mindedness with which he first

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[58] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 108.

strolled in upon our party, and then recall him running on hands and knees along the cabin sofas, pawing the velvet […], I feel the more sure that both must have been calculated. And I sometimes wonder next, if Moipu were alone in this polite duplicity, and ask myself whether the *Casco* were quite so much admired in the Marquesas as our visitors desired us to suppose.
(*ISS*, 103)

By reconsidering his own initial impressions of the islanders' behaviour, Stevenson challenges this familiar scene from travel literature, recognising the ability of the 'subjects' of the text to manipulate the material, and undermining his own authority as narrator. Indeed, it was Stevenson's refusal to adopt the expected narratorial persona that most disturbed the first readers of his text. In May 1889, Fanny wrote to Sidney Colvin, 'very exercised by one thing':

> Louis has the most enchanting material that any one ever had in the whole world for his book, and I am afraid he is going to spoil it all. He has taken into his Scotch Stevenson head, that a stern duty lies before him, and that his book must be a sort of scientific and historical impersonal thing, comparing the different languages […] and the different peoples (*Letters*, VI, 303).

She wrote to Colvin again in January 1891, declaring that Stevenson was still 'fighting to keep his book impersonal'; 'instead of writing about his adventures in these wild islands, he would ventilate his own theories on the vexed questions of race and language' (VII, 79–80). Fanny's distress was echoed by Stevenson's literary friends, after he sent the first section back to be printed in Britain. Henry James claimed he 'missed […] the *personal* painter-touch' in the material, while Colvin obliged Fanny by sending repeated letters to the Pacific criticising the work.[59] Commenting on the Marquesan section first sent back, he stated that 'it loses immensely in not being a personal, consecutive narrative' (VII, 79–80). After the

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[59] Henry James to Stevenson, in Henry James, *Letters*, ed. by Leon Edel, 4 vols (London: Belknap Press, 1980), III, 325.

letters had commenced publication, and had been labelled as 'too monotonous' by

Black and White (VII, 157), Colvin wrote again:

> My impression is that there is not *much* in the way of money or success in
> any part of the work as you have treated it: and that the South Sea islands
> turn out to be not only uninteresting, but actually rather repelling, to
> readers.[60]

Such negativity contributed to Stevenson abandoning his ambitious project and, as I

will explore in the next part of this chapter, determining instead to construct a book

out of fragments of the letters. In June 1891, he wrote to Colvin, stating, '[y]our

opinion as to the Letters as a whole is so damnatory that I put them by', before

declaring in September of that year: 'let us forget this whole unfortunate affair'

(*Letters*, VII, 135, 157). For all its anthropological insights and challenges to the

conventions of nineteenth-century travel writing, *In the South Seas* represents merely

a first draft of the book Stevenson had hoped to write, and it was finally published

under Colvin's editorship in 1896, two years after the author's death.

'A Sea of Islands': Form and Flux in Stevenson's Pacific Imaginary

It was not, as we have seen, the content alone that provoked such antagonism over *In

the South Seas*. From the outset of the project, its form proved a point of contention,

with Stevenson's ambitious ideas soon outgrowing the limiting strictures of letters in

favour of the wider scope of a book. In July 1890, he wrote to McClure from the

Janet Nicoll, reassuring the editor's 'anxious heart that the letters [were] at last under

way'. Nevertheless, he went on to explain to McClure that

> what you are to receive is not so much a certain number of letters, as a certain
> number of chapters in my book. The two things are identical but not

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[60] Colvin, autograph letter, 4 August 1891 (Beinecke 4394), quoted in Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*,
p. 59.

conterminous. It is for you to choose out of the one what is most suitable for
the other. (*Letters*, VI, 394–95)

Unsurprisingly, this news was not well received: having paid for letters, the
newspaper editors were unsatisfied with the 'patches' of a book they were sent (VI,
366). As I will suggest, however, the fragmentary form of letters simply did not suit
Stevenson's perception of the Pacific. Writing to Colvin in November 1890, he made
clear that he was viewing the region about which he was writing, not as a collection
of fragmented, isolated islands, but as a connected, far-reaching *whole*:

> I want you to understand about this South Sea Book. The job is immense; I
> stagger under material. I have seen the first big *tache*. It was necessary to see
> the smaller ones; the letters were at my hand for the purpose; but I was not
> going to lose this experience; and instead of writing mere letters have poured
> out a lot of stuff for the book. How this works and fits, time is to show. But I
> believe in time, I shall get the whole thing in focus. (VII, 29)

While this ambition to 'get the whole' Pacific in 'focus' might appear an imperious
and arrogant undertaking, it nevertheless reveals a holistic interpretation of the
region that, as I shall explore, differed to the conventional Western view of the South
Seas. Stevenson argued against jumping to conclusions on both the region and the
book based on incomplete evidence, warning Colvin that 'till we have the whole (or
much) of the stuff together, you can hardly judge – and I can hardly judge' (VII, 29).

When considering Stevenson's portrayal of the Pacific islands, most scholars
focus on the heterogeneity he presents, his recognition of the various and diverse
cultures in the region. Jolly, for example, suggests that he 'regarded every new
island as a new world', encountering 'not one Pacific' on his travels 'but many'.[61]
Certainly, Stevenson does not generalise about the Pacific, but continuously
compares and contrasts the islands, criticising, as demonstrated in the previous

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[61] Jolly, 'Stevenson and the Pacific', pp. 125, 128.

section, those writers who do not. Yet, while acknowledging his portrayals of

diversity, I would argue against the idea that 'every new island' was 'a new world'

to the author, suggesting that, in fact, his reluctance to consider each island as a

separate entity is just as significant as his refusal to regard 'races in a lump' (*ISS*,

60). In his influential essay, anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa calls for a

reconceptualization of the Pacific:

> There is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far
> sea' and as 'a sea of islands'. The first emphasises dry surfaces in a vast
> ocean far from the centres of power. When you focus this way you stress the
> smallness and remoteness of the islands. The second is a more holistic
> perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships.[62]

In his efforts to depict the Pacific as a whole rather than as separate, disconnected

pieces of land, Stevenson similarly sees the region as a sea of islands, as opposed to

isolated islands in the sea. As well as affirming the author's recognition of difference

and diversity, Timothy Hayes suggests that 'Stevenson's approach to presenting the

South Seas to his readers' was essentially 'story by story and island by island'.[63] My

analysis differs from this assessment on two counts: firstly, this fragmented

'approach' can hardly be attributed to Stevenson, imposed as it was by the epistolary

form and rejected by the author almost from the moment he begins writing.

Secondly, even within the confines of the form, Stevenson does not restrict himself

to discussing one island at a time. As I will demonstrate, far from presenting the

Pacific 'story by story and island by island', he makes frequent cross-island

comparisons, merging stories from different parts of his travels in a thematic

approach, often at the expense of a consecutive narrative. In fact, his rejection of the

letter form for the more coherent and encompassing structure of a book is one the

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[62] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', p. 7.
[63] Timothy S. Hayes, '"Not So Childish as it Seems": Stevenson's Interrogation of Childishness in the South Seas', *JSS*, 9 (2012), 291–312 (p. 294).

clearest indicators of Stevenson's different perspective of the Pacific, as he refuses to

offer the fragmented depiction desired of him by the British and American literary

world.

Long before Europeans began to circumnavigate the globe and explore the

Pacific, this ocean had been explored and traversed by many generations of

indigenous inhabitants. John Mack identifies the 'Polynesian mariners who criss-

crossed the Pacific occupying Rapa Nui (Easter Island) by AD 400 and Hawaii

possibly a century later, and who had found and settled New Zealand by AD 1000'.[64]

He explains that, while they 'did not maintain regular contact across all the islands

they settled', these communities 'did have the means to set out on long-distance

voyages on a regular basis': 'the sea connected islands rather than separating them –

a fundamental difference between European and Pacific perceptions of the maritime

world.'[65] Hau'ofa elaborates on this point, explaining that the Pacific

> was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled
> unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers.
> From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby
> expanding social networks for greater flow of wealth.[66]

Indeed, he argues it was 'continental men, namely Europeans, on entering the Pacific

after crossing huge expanses of ocean, who introduced the view of "islands in a far

sea". From this perspective the islands are tiny, isolated dots in a vast ocean.'[67]

Stevenson recognises the potential for this opinion, but pre-empts it, writing to

Colvin in September 1888:

> My dear Colvin, Only a word. Get out your big atlas; and imagine a straight
> line from San Francisco to Anaho [...]. It looks pretty bald on the atlas; not
> in fact; nor I trust in the 130 odd pp. of diary. (*Letters*, VI, 209)

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[64] Mack, *The Sea*, p. 20.
[65] Mack, *The Sea*, pp. 63, 65.
[66] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', p. 8.
[67] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', p. 7.

Only months into his voyage, Stevenson challenges the cartographic representation of the South Seas. While the Pacific Ocean might seem 'bald' on a map, it is busy in Stevenson's prose: he provides Colvin with a frenetic description of his movements through the region, including over ten Pacific place names in only seven lines, and one sentence. He names Anaho, Nuka Hiva, Tai-o-hae, Ua-Pu, Roua-Poa, Taaha-uku, Hiva-Oa and more, declaring that 'the interest, indeed, has been *incredible'* (VI, 209).

Indeed, the islands in Stevenson's travel text are very rarely portrayed as isolated. I have already demonstrated how *In the South Seas* takes the effects of colonialism and globalisation on indigenous communities as one of its key foci. Yet it also depicts the networks connecting islands on a daily basis. When describing Hiva Oa, for example, Stevenson writes:

> There was a certain traffic in our anchorage at Atuona […]. Sails were seen steering from its mouth; now it would be a whale-boat manned with native rowdies, and heavy with copra for sale; now perhaps a single canoe come after commodities to buy. (*ISS*, 85)

It is industry that Stevenson depicts here: not a romantic, deserted island but a node in a busy network of maritime, inter-island trade. In the Paumotus chapters, he highlights the importance of such networks (both commercial and political), explaining that 'Fakarava was chosen to be the seat of Government' for that island group 'from nautical considerations only':

> It is eccentrically situate; the productions, even for a low island, poor […]. But the lagoon has two good passages, one to leeward, one to windward, so that in all states of the wind it can be left and entered, and this advantage, for a government of scattered islands was decisive. (p. 115)

Stevenson recognises the significance of easy mobility for both indigenous trade and purposes of the French colonial government of the Paumotus, portraying the 'edge' of this island as fluid and permeable rather than insulating and protective.

When considering this island group, however, the text also acknowledges how the mobility the indigenous population practiced in the past has been limited and controlled, with the fluidity of these island borders restricted. It explains how during his visit the 'Governor of Papeete [in Tahiti] issued a decree':

> All land in the Paumotus must be defined and registered by a certain date. Now, the folk of the archipelago are half nomadic; a man can scarce be said to belong to a particular atoll; he belongs to several, perhaps holds a stake and counts cousinship in half a score; […] [but] were all now engaged in disputing boundaries. (p. 121)

Hao'ofa asserts that 'evidence of the conglomerations of islands with their economies and cultures is readily available in the oral traditions of the islands concerned, and in blood ties that are retained today.'[68] Stevenson not only identifies the significance of inter-island movement and relationships to the indigenous cultures of the Pacific, but highlights the constraints placed on these traditions by nineteenth-century imperialism, a process that transformed this 'once boundless world into the Pacific islands states and territories that we know today'.[69]

Stevenson, then, undermines European or Western conceptions of the Pacific islands as isolated and separate. Yet, as Edmond and Smith identify, this impression has a pervasive potency that remains with us today. They explain that, in terms of 'the modern European understanding of human consciousness', there is a 'suggestive congruence between islands and individuals', with islands possessing 'a marked individuality, an obstinate separateness that we like to think corresponds to our own'.[70] The islands of the Pacific are perhaps the most linked to individuality in the Western cultural imagination: they are distant enough from our busy and interconnected lives that the concept of a 'deserted island' can still seem tenable,

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[68] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', p. 9.
[69] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', p. 10.
[70] Edmond and Smith (eds), 'Introduction', p. 4.

perpetuated by the popularity of survival narratives such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). This eighteenth-century novel is the classic example of the connection between individual and island: Fulton and Hoffenberg note 'the continuing popularity of *Robinson Crusoe* into the nineteenth century', and how similar 'narratives quickly became a sought after source of details of Oceania', helping to shape the perception of the Pacific in 'the Victorian imagination'.[71] In *In the South Seas*, Stevenson defies this convention: in contrast to what some scholars suggest, the author does not examine the region 'island by island', exclusively discussing only one island or archipelago in each chapter, but writes of them comparatively. In a letter to Burlingame in 1889, Stevenson declared that the travel text was 'of course postponed beyond calculation': 'for I do not mean to write a word till I have all matter of comparison at hand; so that when I begin, I shall draw on a full knowledge' (*Letters*, VI, 319). Rather than delivering information island by island, Stevenson refused to even begin until he had gathered enough material to compare effectively and accurately, rejecting the 'discursive possibilities' of the 'separateness of islands', in favour of a relational and holistic portrayal of Pacific cultures.[72]

As part of this comparative approach, Stevenson was required to rewrite the journal he had kept during his voyages through the islands. Rennie explains how, when drawing the material together for publication, Stevenson formed 'thematic and aesthetic patterns', incorporating 'material from later voyages and making grand inter-island comparisons'. Rennie identifies the Marquesas chapters as the section

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[71] Fulton and Hoffenberg (eds), 'Introduction', p. 9. Other examples of such survival narratives that link individuals' development with a 'desert-island' setting include Frederick Marryat, *Masterman Ready, or the Wreck of the Pacific* (1841); R. M. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island* (1857); Jules Verne, *Godfrey Morgan: A Californian Mystery, or School for Crusoes* (1882).
[72] Edmond and Smith, 'Introduction', p. 4.

where this 'reorganization was most ambitious', containing 'extravagant cross-references to places and islands visited subsequently'. [73] I have already demonstrated Stevenson's comparative approach in this section of *In the South Seas*, when he considers depopulation in the Pacific, comparing the Marquesas with Hawaii, Mangareva, Easter Island, Tahiti, New Zealand, the Paumotus, and Samoa (*ISS*, 31).[74] Rennie argues that such attempts at relational analysis decrease in the later chapters, following the negative responses Stevenson received to his impersonal, anthropological approach from the first readers of the Marquesan section.[75]

Yet Stevenson did not change tack entirely: although chastened, his continued comparatist ambitions can still be detected in the later chapters. In 'A Paumotuan Funeral', for example, Stevenson describes attending such an event, but soon determines to 'try to deal with the whole matter' of the afterlife in Polynesian beliefs (p. 142). He moves from discussing the funeral on the Paumotuan island Fakarava to an 'experience […] on the isle of Katiu' (p. 142), and then one 'on the island of Anaa' (p. 144), all in the same archipelago. He compares these practices and beliefs with those he witnessed in the Marquesas, Tahiti and Samoa, before commenting that 'no Polynesian seems at all to share our European horror of human bones and mummies' (p. 147). Rennie argues that 'Stevenson's attempt to unify all his ghost material – and justify its enormous presence on a tiny atoll in the Paumotus – leaves the reader frustrated.'[76] Yet, while the lack of a strictly consecutive narrative might unsettle readers expecting a personal travel account, Stevenson's collation of material here is significant. In comparing Polynesian ideas of the afterlife, he presents a rich and complex cultural history. He refuses to depict the

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[73] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. xxvi.
[74] See above, p. 198.
[75] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. xxvi.
[76] Rennie, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.

islands in isolation, recognising that the cultural history of this 'tiny atoll' reaches far beyond the land it stands on, stretching across the sea in connection with the other islands of the archipelago and the wider region of the Pacific.

By determining to depict the Pacific in the totality of its relationships and rejecting the conventional representation of isolated islands, Stevenson necessarily abandons the usual driving force of his texts: the narrative. Mobility, so important for Stevenson in life and central to many of his works, is sidelined in *In the South Seas*, which is more concerned with depicting the relational aspects of the islands than the distances between them. As is made evident in the itinerary outlined in this chapter's introduction, Stevenson's travels through the region included some long voyages: the party were at sea sometimes for weeks or even a month at a time. He wrote to Colvin that he never wearied of this lifestyle, but was often 'sorry that the voyage drew so early to an end', never losing his 'fidelity to blue water and a ship' (*Letters*, VI, 403). Yet, despite this 'fidelity' to maritime travel, Stevenson actively excludes description of it from *In the South Seas*, which does not dwell on the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean; in fact, the long periods at sea are barely mentioned. One of the few descriptions of a voyage is at the opening of the Paumotus chapters. This section is linked to the Marquesas chapters by an account of the *Casco's* journey between them (although the narrative is dropped shortly after the party arrives at their destination). Yet even here, the consideration is brief; seven days at sea are afforded only a few lines of the text: 'For a few days we sailed with a steady trade, and a steady westerly current setting us to leeward; and toward sundown of the seventh it was supposed we should have sighted Takaroa' (*ISS*, 108). Indeed, it is not a vast, open sea that is presented here but a dense archipelago, where several islands are lighted upon in quick succession. Stevenson explains that 'in no quarter are the

atolls so thickly congregated' (p. 108), his longest description of voyaging between

the islands refuting the notion 'of Oceania as a vast empty space in which separate

islands hang suspended'.[77]

It is also at this point in *In the South Seas*, the point in which most space is

allocated to Stevenson's voyages between the islands, that the text appears to

undermine the colonial project of mapping, controlling and acquiring knowledge of

the land and sea. Stevenson explains how, when sailing through this archipelago,

'navigation is set with perils': 'dead reckoning becomes a farce; the charts are not to

be trusted; and such is the number and similarity of these islands that, even when

you have picked one up, you may be none the wiser' (p. 108). Not only are the

current 'charts not to be trusted', but Stevenson begins 'to be sorry for

cartographers' in their future attempts to map the seas:

> We were scarce doing three and a half; and they ask me to believe that (in
> five minutes) we had dropped an island, passed eight miles of open water,
> and run almost high and dry upon the next. But my captain was more sorry
> for himself, to be afloat in such a labyrinth. (p. 111)

Mack describes how Polynesian mariners navigated using their inherited knowledge

of 'seasonal variants, the local currents set up by islands and reefs and the less

perceptible oceanic currents', relying on 'the "feel" of the canoe and the close

observation of the sea and the skies' to ensure 'a successful outcome'.[78] Conversely,

Stevenson depicts European techniques of navigation and cartography as

unsuccessful at regulating the Pacific Ocean. 'It was not without misgiving that

[Stevenson's] captain risked the *Casco* in such waters' (*ISS*, 108), the elements and

geography of the region remaining resistant to full colonial control.

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[77] Juniper Ellis, 'Literary Cartographies in Oceania', in *Message in a Bottle: The Literature of Small Islands*, ed. by Laurie Brinklow, Frank Ledwell, and Jane Ledwell (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 2000), pp. 51–64 (p. 53).
[78] Mack, *The Sea*, p. 64.

Stevenson's own unwillingness to coherently map his mobility also distances

the text from conventional colonial discourse. Indeed, the absence of a sequential

narrative linking the islands, and describing Stevenson's movements through them,

is in itself a challenge to imperial narratives. Smethurst explains how an 'imperial

form' became 'dominant in Europe in the nineteenth century', attempting to order

and control space and mobility, and involving an effort 'of enclosing, naming, and

"rationalising" geographical space on a planet-wide scale.'[79] As such, the imperial

form necessarily suppresses the 'inherent instability and disorder that accompanies

mobility'.[80] Smethurst goes on to suggest how, 'through the formal conventions of

the travel narrative, mobility is spatialised and synchronised, so the travel writer is

able to present reality as an orderly representation', concluding that there is 'a link,

then, between imperialist discourse and the orderly presentation of travelling

mobility in imperialist travel narratives.'[81] It was precisely Stevenson's refusal to

provide an orderly account of his mobility which so frustrated the first readers of his

South Seas letters. As well as lamenting the lack of a 'personal, consecutive

narrative', Colvin advised Stevenson to 'set right the places where you leave us

puzzled as to the course, order and geography of your voyages' (*Letters*, VII, 157).

He particularly disdained how the text leaped from the Paumotus chapters to the

Gilberts, without any detail about leaving the former and with an unexplained detour

to Honolulu. Stevenson dismissed this objection with particular vehemence:

> As for telling you where I went or when, or anything about Honolulu, I
> would rather die; that is fair and plain. How can anybody care when or how I
> left Honolulu. This is (excuse me) childish. A man of upwards of forty
> cannot waste his time in communicating matter of that degree of indifference.
> The Letters, it appears, are tedious; by God, they would be more tedious still

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[79] Smethurst, 'Introduction', p. 5.
[80] Miguel A. Cabañas, et al., 'Introduction', in *Politics, Identity, and Mobility in Travel Writing*
(London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1–11 (p. 1).
[81] Smethurst, 'Introduction', p. 2.

> if I wasted my time upon such infantile and sucking bottle details. If I ever
> put in any such detail, it is because it leads into something or serves as a
> transition. To tell it for its own sake, never! (VII, 157)

In his determined effort to portray the conditions and complexities of the islands themselves, Stevenson violently rejected the necessity of depicting coherent movement through clearly regulated space. Indeed, by refusing to order his mobility, he challenged the spatial order necessary to imperialism, simultaneously rejecting the conventions of the personal travel narrative and the rationalising imperatives of the imperial form.

<div align="center">*</div>

In her essay on literary cartographies, Juniper Ellis argues that the 'Pacific Islands gain meaning and identity as island groups defined in connection with one another. This concept pushes that axiom of individual interdependence, "No man is an island": here, no island is an island'.[82] It is this conception of the Pacific that I have argued Stevenson demonstrates in *In the South Seas.* Through his comparative approach, he challenges the prevailing Eurocentric understanding of the region as a collection of separate, remote islands isolated in a vast and distant ocean. Instead, he presents a variety of complex cultures that are linked both historically and through nineteenth-century systems of trade and mobility. By focusing on the relational aspects of the islands he discards a coherent narrative of his travels, choosing to present the *connections across* the islands rather than the *distances between* them. His holistic perception of the Pacific, then, is directly connected to the antagonistic response the text received: as I discussed earlier, Stevenson's friends criticised his efforts to efface his own narrative in favour of anthropological comparisons. Yet it

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[82] Ellis, 'Literary Cartographies in Oceania', p. 55.

was not just the antagonism over the content that we can relate to Stevenson's

holistic conception of the region, but the opposition regarding the form of the work

that explored it. The comparative approach he adopted was entirely inappropriate for

a collection of letters; it needed the completeness and coherence, the reach and the

scope of a book. The serialised letters were, by definition, separate, and demanded

neat, independent tales of each island. It was Stevenson's determination not to

present the islands as separate but to explore them in the totality of their

relationships, which meant he so quickly discarded the idea of letters, his conception

of the project shifting in line with his conception of the Pacific.

For Hau'ofa, the perception of the Pacific islands as isolated dots in a vast

ocean is one that persists. He argues that 'the perpetrators of the smallness view of

Oceania' continue to sweep 'aside the whole universe of Oceanic mores, and just

about all our potentials for autonomy':

> one way or another, they or nearly all of them are involved directly or
> indirectly in the fields of aided development and Pacific Rim geopolitics, for
> the purposes of which it is necessary to portray our huge world in tiny, needy
> bits. To acknowledge the larger reality would be to undermine the prevailing
> view, and to frustrate certain agendas and goals of powerful interests.[83]

Hau'ofa argues that it is geopolitics and the necessary dependency of certain regions

in the processes of global capitalism that ensure this conception of the Pacific

endures. I would tentatively suggest that some critical interpretations of *In the South*

Seas persist in reading Stevenson's portrayal of the Pacific through the lens

described by Hau'ofa. Hayes suggests that, because the text is 'marked by frequent

shifts in mood and points of view', it is 'worth viewing the entire book more as a

collection of essays than as a fully coherent work of travel writing.'[84] In reading *In*

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[83] Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', p. 14.
[84] Hayes, 'Stevenson's Interrogation of Childishness', p. 307.

the South Seas in this way, surely the cross-island comparisons become less apparent, the contemporary networks and the historical links between islands harder to spot? Perhaps by perceiving the chapters as separate entities, distinct fragments rather than part of a whole, we would identify a corresponding fragmentation of the Pacific, and begin to view the region and the text in the way Stevenson, seemingly, wanted least: as the disparate experiences of one man's travels in a number of distinct and isolated islands.

Hayes does identify *In the South Seas* as only 'the author's "first draft" of' his extensive study of the region, and perhaps this is why he argues against reading it as a coherent work. Indeed, the text we read today is certainly not the definitive book on the Pacific that Stevenson envisaged. The later chapters do show the influence of the criticisms he received and are far less ambitious in their cross-island comparisons, detailing more of his own personal experiences and fewer ethnographic observations. Colvin wrote again in May 1891, 'expressing the disappointment felt by Stevenson's friends at home at the impersonal and even tedious character of some portions of the South Sea Letters that had reached' them (*Letters*, VII, 115). By this point, however, Stevenson had already given up the ambitious project he had originally conceived. After repeated attempts to defend his vision, he wrote to Colvin in April of that year

> I am now so sick that I intend, when the Letters are done […], simply to […] make up a book of shreds and patches; which will not be what I had hoped to make, but must have the value it has and be d—d to it. I cannot fight any longer […]; really five years were wanting, when I could have made a book; but I have a family, and – perhaps I could not make the book after all, and anyway, I'll never be allowed for Fanny has strong opinions and I prefer her peace of mind to my ideas. (*Letters*, VII, 102)

It was not, of course, Fanny's opinions alone that prompted this surrender: following Colvin's critical letter in May 1891, Stevenson told him, 'you may be

sure, after the friendly freedoms of your criticism (necessary I am sure, and

wholesome I know, but untimely to the poor labourer in his landslip) that mighty

little of it will stand' (*Letters*, VII, 116). It was Colvin, however, who followed

through with Stevenson's plan of compiling 'a book from shreds and patches'; he

prepared the Edinburgh Edition of *In the South Seas*, published in 1896, two years

after Stevenson's death. The change of title from Stevenson's preferred *The South

Seas* demonstrates the enduring conflict surrounding the work; the additional

preposition places Stevenson back *in* the text, despite all his attempts to transcend

the personal travel narrative. Yet, while so far removed from the one Stevenson had

hoped to write, the text we are left with today has a value of its own. As a piece of

nineteenth-century travel writing, it disrupts many conventions of the genre, and it

challenges a narrow view of the Pacific that persists today. Indeed, even in 1896,

there were readers ready to recognise the significance of what Stevenson was aiming

for. While he did not manage to complete the comprehensive, anthropological survey

of the Pacific he had planned, the *New York Times*' review of *In the South Seas*

acknowledged just how far Stevenson came in his attempt:

> There are very few who have the hardihood to carry the distinction between
> manners and morals so far as Stevenson carried it. To his alert and interested
> mind it was singularly true that nothing human could be foreign.[85]

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[85] 'Stevenson's Travel Papers', *New York Times*, 17 October 1896, BR4.

Chapter Four

The Wrecker

> Why dedicate to you a tale of a caste so modern […]; – full of the need and
> the lust of money, so that there is scarce a page in which the dollars do not
> jingle; – full of the unrest and movement of our century, so that the reader is
> hurried from place to place and sea to sea, and the book is less a romance
> than a panorama […] (*Wrecker*, 404)

In 1904, Halford J. Mackinder, Reader in Geography at Oxford and Director of the

London School of Economics, wrote an essay entitled 'The Geopolitical Pivot of

History'. In it he proposed a geopolitical theory that responded to the expansion of

global transport and communication networks, one that conceptualised the world as a

single organism which would be affected as a whole by changes anywhere on the

globe:

> For the first time we can perceive something of the real proportion of features
> and events on the stage of the whole world, and may seek a formula which
> shall express certain aspects, at any rate, of geographical causation in
> universal history.[1]

Stephen Kern explains that Mackinder's premise that it is both possible and

necessary

> to think in worldwide terms is characteristic of a number of observations
> made at that time. Some saw the global perspective as a force for peace,
> others as a cause of war, but all shared the idea that the world was becoming
> smaller and more unified.[2]

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[1] H. J. Mackinder, 'The Geopolitical Pivot of History', *Geographical Journal*, 23 (1904), 421–44 (p.
422).
[2] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.
228.

This growing 'global perspective' in late Victorian society is reflected in Stevenson's writing. From his very first journey out of Europe, Stevenson's interest in the forces of modernity connecting the world in the nineteenth century becomes evident in his texts. The works examined in Chapters Two and Three explore the conditions and effects of globalisation. Their production histories also demonstrate Stevenson's own recourse to the growing networks of transport and communication of the late nineteenth century, enabling him to write and publish from halfway across the world. Yet it is *The Wrecker*, Stevenson's first novel from the Pacific, that most clearly reflects his growing understanding of the world as a single, unified system. Of all of his writing, this is the work that 'thinks in worldwide terms', as it captures 'the unrest and movement' of its century. In its composition, its production and its narrative, *The Wrecker* is characterised by global networks and mobility, specifically the rapidly developing mobility of the late Victorian age, and the associated opportunities, limitations and dangers this presents.

Co-authored with Stevenson's stepson Lloyd Osbourne, the story was conceived on a ship and started during a visit to Abemama in Kiribati, while the family were still travellers, and before they decided to settle in the Pacific. During the novel's production process, manuscripts travelled from Samoa to America to Britain, and back again, multiple times. This mobility is mirrored in *The Wrecker*'s narrative: the characters move between Europe, America and the Pacific, in pursuit of wealth that is generated through or requires access to mobility. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how *In the South Seas* critiques the uneven geographic developments inherent in globalisation. Despite its emphasis on mobility, however, *The Wrecker* does not question such unequal access to innovations in transport or the impact of this enhanced mobility on the Pacific islands and their inhabitants. Indeed,

unlike much of his other writing from the Pacific, *The Wrecker* does not offer a

critique of Western involvement in the region; indeed, it does not even provide

detailed insights into Pacific culture. It is, in fact, *movement* and not *place* that is the

focus of this novel: *The Wrecker* demonstrates the link between capitalism and

developments in transport, depicting the significance of speed in this mobile age.

The time–space compression engendered from these developments is displayed not

only through the content but also through the structure of *The Wrecker*, the dynamic

forces shaping the late nineteenth century epitomised in this chaotic, nomadic novel.

> The story is framed by a prologue and epilogue; as Roslyn Jolly explains,
>
> these are set in actual Pacific islands that Stevenson knew from his travels:
> Tai-o-hae in the Marquesas, which he visited on the yacht *Casco* in July
> 1888, and Manihiki (now part of the Cook Islands), where he stopped in May
> 1890 during the voyage on the steamer *Janet Nicoll*.[3]

Within these narrative parentheses, however, the story travels around the globe. It

begins in the United States with Loudon Dodd, an American of Scottish descent,

who leaves a life of commerce in the US for the artisan quarters of Paris: here, he

meets another American, James Pinkerton. When Dodd's father dies and he is forced

to return to America, via a visit to family in Scotland, Pinkerton joins him, and they

become involved in a variety of commercial enterprises, almost all related to

transport and mobility. One such venture is the speculative purchase of a wreck, the

Flying Scud, which they believe to hold a supply of opium. Dodd travels to the

wreck in the heart of the Pacific Ocean only to find it empty; instead, he discovers

the mystery of the ship: the seamen who were rescued were not the original crew,

but a different group of men who killed the *Scud*'s original crew. Among this group

of murderers is Norris Carthew, whom Dodd tracks to England along with a lawyer,

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[3] Roslyn Jolly, 'Stevenson and the Pacific', in *EC*, pp. 118–33 (p. 129).

Bellairs. Dodd sympathises with Carthew, who is being blackmailed by Bellairs, because of their similar childhoods dominated by disapproving fathers. The narrative voice switches to Carthew as he relays his equally peripatetic experiences, and ends, in the epilogue, with Dodd and Carthew partners in a trading yacht.

As Glenda Norquay explains, with its interest in 'connections between culture and commerce, between old moralities and new worlds, *The Wrecker* follows in the pattern of other late nineteenth-century colonial texts'. She also notes, however, that 'the framework in which it is set is very much Stevenson's own'.[4] Indeed, while elements of *The Wrecker* bear a resemblance to the African romances of Henry Rider Haggard and to Stevenson's own *Treasure Island* (1883), the novel also represents a clear departure from the traditional imperial romance. Phillip Steer explains how, by the time Stevenson published *The Wrecker*, 'the success of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She: A History of Adventure* (1887) and their subsequent imitators had established the imperial romance as a flourishing and easily recognizable popular genre.'[5] And while *The Wrecker* is concerned with Western characters embarking on adventures into exotic colonial spaces, it also contains a number of formal divergences from the genre:

> These include markedly discontinuous and non-linear plots; Euro-American characters whose development is similarly discontinuous if not static, as well as falling short of gentlemanly ideals; multiple geographic settings; sporadic and unpredictable outbursts of violence between European characters; and a persistent interest in the trading ship and the volatile consequences of financial speculation.[6]

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[4] Glenda Norquay, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Theories of Reading: The Reader as Vagabond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 184.
[5] Philip Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development: Spatiality, Trade, and Form in Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific Novels', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 43 (2015), 343–56 (p. 345).
[6] Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development', p. 345.

As I will explore in the second section of this chapter, *The Wrecker* is also lacking a key element of imperial romance: imperial enterprise. Instead of representing a nation's colonial ambitions, the novel depicts a host of characters who are *denationalised* – driven into the Pacific by the opportunities of global capitalism rather than by national pride or imperial expansion. In this sense, the narrative also differs from conventional nineteenth-century maritime and adventure novels. Nathalie Jaëck explains: 'The sea is […] a topos of the contemporary adventure novel from Kipling to Verne, from Defoe to Dumas, away from domestic spheres and naturalist cities, a distinctive element of exoticism and deterritorialization.'[7] And while the sea is central to the mobile narrative of *The Wrecker*, it is not a site of pure exoticism; it does not act as a foil to naturalist cities. Instead, the sea is where the novel depicts the realities of global capitalism and the significance of mobility in the nineteenth century. It is a site of deterritorialisation, certainly, but not in the name of romance and exoticism; instead, it is where the global world system comes clearly into view, where maritime networks connect and create a world economy.

   The Wrecker has had a turbulent reception history. When it was first published, reviews were mixed. *The Scotsman* (July 1892) declared 'it the best book Stevenson had yet produced', believing it to represent 'a new concern in that its "motives and sources of interest are drawn from the life of today"'. Alternatively, *The Athenaeum* (August 1892) 'objected to the mass of irrelevant detail and the ignobility of the characters' (*CH*, 397). The most common protest, however, was about the structure. Paul Maixner explains that many 'objected to the faulty design' (p. 397), or what Lionel Johnson from *The Academy* termed the 'lack of symmetry

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[7] Nathalie Jaëck, 'Conrad's and Stevenson's Logbooks and "Paper Boats": Attempts in Textual Wreckage', in *Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad: Writers of Transition*, ed. by Linda Dryden, Stephen Arata and Eric Massie (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2009), pp. 39–51 (p. 39).

and rounded form' (p. 405). Later critics tended to pronounce the text a failure or

ultimately flawed. In 1984, J. R. Hammond suggested that 'the weaknesses of the

book stem precisely from the discursive, episodic method' and that the 'overall

impression is of a farrago, a disconnected array of scenes, each animated with colour

and incident but lacking any sense of a dominant unifying theme.'[8] Stephen Arata

explains that, traditionally,

> critics have dismissed it as overly diffuse, shapeless, and more than a little
> self-indulgent – the closest thing to a loose baggy monster that Stevenson
> ever produced. Frank McLynn's assessment is representative: while *The
> Wrecker*, he says, is 'in some ways the oddest and most intriguing' of
> Stevenson's novels, it is finally a failure because it lacks a 'proper story
> structure' and because 'there are far too many diversions and irrelevancies
> that clog the action.'[9]

More recently, however, scholars have begun to reconsider this assessment.

Rather than pronounce the book a failure, they have suggested there is meaning to be

derived from the episodic structure and frenetic narrative. In her study of maritime

fiction, Margaret Cohen notes a renewed interest in writing about the sea:

> Our ability to see the importance of the maritime frontier may be an example
> of […] a constellation between an earlier era of intensive globalization and
> our own. Today, reporting on the front page of U.S. newspapers and websites
> concerns pirates off the coast of Somalia and on the South China seas, the
> need to enhance our navy to protect against global terrorism by sea, the
> problem of freedom of movement […]. Such topics are just a few aspects of
> our current era of globalization that hearken back to the global age of sail.[10]

Perhaps, then, the recent critical reappraisal of *The Wrecker* can be linked to its

focus on modernity in the nineteenth century, as the parallels between these concerns

and those we debate in the twenty-first century become more apparent. Indeed, many

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[8] J. R. Hammond, *A Robert Louis Stevenson Companion: A Guide to the Novels, Essays and Short Stories* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 173.
[9] Stephen Arata, 'Stevenson's Careful Observances', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 47 (2007) <https://doi.org/10.7202/016704ar> (para. 7 of 33).
[10] Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 14.

of the recent readings of the novel focus on Stevenson's exploration of contemporary

issues, often linking these with the structural elements that so troubled earlier critics.

Ian Duncan, for example, suggests that *The Wrecker*'s mobile narrative and episodic

structure are indicative of the very modern capitalist system that Stevenson is trying

to depict. He argues that 'the formal dispersal of the narrative tracks a planetary

movement of capital' and that the novel 'commits itself to the serial extensions and

dislocations of a new kind of space constituted by the planetary zigzags of capital'.[11]

Phillip Steer also revaluates the meaning of the text's form and narrative, suggesting

it offers 'a window onto the workings of modern capitalism'. In his insightful

examination of the text, Steer suggests that it engages with the '"peculiar geometry"

of an archipelagic, borderless maritime space', portraying through its narrative and

its form 'a vision of capitalist modernity as unable to homogenize and rationalize

imperial space'.[12] In 2017, Caroline McCracken-Flesher offered another spatial

reading of *The Wrecker*, suggesting the novel 'unplaces space' by exploring

'placement as a process, a state, and an ongoing condition of life'.[13]

In this chapter, I contribute to this reinvigorated conversation about *The

Wrecker*, joining others in suggesting that the formal and narrative elements often

dismissed as failings are in fact rooted in the novel's exploration of the changing

nature of time and space in the nineteenth century. My reading will be distinct from

recent considerations of the novel, however, through its joint focus on the text's

literary content and production history. Without drawing direct or straightforward

correlations between Stevenson's experience while publishing *The Wrecker* and the

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[11] Ian Duncan, 'Stevenson and Fiction', in *EC*, pp. 11–26 (pp. 24, 26).
[12] Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development', pp. 344, 351.
[13] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, '*The Wrecker*: Unplacing Space in the South Seas', in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity*, ed. by Richard J. Hill (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 41–55 (p. 43).

resulting literary text, I nevertheless suggest that the parallels between them are worth a deeper examination. Stevenson faced a number of challenges publishing a text serially in America while based in the Pacific. The authors themselves, as well as the manuscripts, were extremely mobile: just as sections of the novel were separated by continents during the production process, so, at times, were Stevenson and Osbourne.

In the first part of this chapter, I examine the intense mobility that attended the composition and production of *The Wrecker*. Alongside this mobility, I consider the issues of literary production that are present in the text, far more so than issues related to the changing environment of the Pacific islands. *The Wrecker* was Stevenson's first attempt to connect imaginatively with his readers in Britain and America while based in the Pacific, and a concern with the literary marketplace is evident in the narrative. Indeed, in his first novel from the Pacific, issues of literary production take precedence over colonial exploitation. Considering the high level of mobility and fragmentation that attended its production, it is perhaps unsurprising that *The Wrecker's* narrative is built around the networks of transport and communication that connect continents, and that it focuses on the risks and opportunities they present. I will suggest that the conditions in which Stevenson was writing and publishing are echoed in *The Wrecker*: in its mobile narrative, its interest in issues of literary production and its focus on transport and speed, the novel reflects the concerns of an itinerant, nineteenth-century author publishing his first novel from the Pacific.

The other aspect that will distinguish this chapter from other recent examinations of *The Wrecker* is my exploration of mobility. Drawing on the work of Yi-Fu Tuan, McCracken-Flesher considers the extensive movement of the narrative,

but focuses her argument on how this mobility affects 'place' in the text: 'Stevenson

returned place into space, stasis into spacing, by looking away from destinations and

multiplying navigation points in time.'[14] In contrast, I interrogate the meaning

implicated in mobility *itself*, rather than its relation to other aspects of geography,

such a 'space' and 'place'. Tim Cresswell describes the geographical concept of

mobility as 'socially produced motion': an exploration of mobility discloses how

'movement is made meaningful, and how the resulting ideologies of mobility

become implicated in the production of mobile practices.'[15] He explains how

'geographers have not subjected mobility to the same scrutiny as the more allegedly

fixed and bounded categories of space, time, territory, and landscape'.[16] Cresswell

highlights in particular Tuan and Edward Relph as geographers for whom 'place […]

is the phenomenological starting point', leading them 'to see geography as the study

of the Earth as the home of Humanity.'[17] In opposition to this approach, Cresswell

asks why 'geography [is] equated with fixity and stasis? Mobility is just as spatial –

as geographical – and just as central to the human experience of the world'.[18]

In the second section of the chapter, I explore the central role of mobility in

the text, looking at the meanings and ideologies implicated in the mobile practices

described, and how they reflect wider changes in nineteenth-century global culture. I

examine the specific nature of this mobility: the continuous focus on vehicles,

vessels, transport; the link between mobility and capitalism; the significance, power

but also dangers of the enhanced mobility of the nineteenth century. While recent

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[14] McCracken-Flesher, 'Unplacing Space in the South Seas', p. 52.
[15] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge 2006), pp. 3, 21.
[16] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 3.
[17] Tim Cresswell, 'Theorizing Place', in *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World*, ed. by Tim Cresswell and Ginette Verstraete (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 11–31 (p. 13).
[18] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 3.

critics have focused on 'place' in relation to *The Wrecker* (Steer posits the novel as

'responding to the Pacific's cultural diversity and fragmented archipelagic

geography'),[19] I propose that the nomadic narrative and fractured form are also

representative of changes in *time*. Through his focus on speed and the rationalisation

of time following internationally accepted time zones, as well as in the episodic,

fragmented structure of the novel itself, Stevenson depicts the time–space

compression of the late nineteenth century, as precipitated by developments in

mobility. It is not the Pacific that inspires or is revealed in *The Wrecker*, but

modernity itself: 'the tone of the age', the 'unrest and movement of the century' are

what *The Wrecker* depicts, not an individual place but a global world system, the

routes and connections that, for Stevenson, are the defining features of the time.

'This is a hell of a collaboration, half the world away': Itinerant Authorship and Literary Production in *The Wrecker*

As well as being Stevenson's first novel written from and about the Pacific, *The*

Wrecker is also the only work of fiction studied in detail in this thesis. The primary

focus of the previous chapters has been Stevenson's travel writing, and this transition

to fiction perhaps requires some justification. As Oliver Buckton notes, 'travel

writing and fiction were not ultimately distinct for Stevenson, who argued: "The art

of narrative, in fact, is the same, whether it is applied to the selection and illustration

of a real series of events or of an imaginary series."'[20] Indeed, *The Wrecker* in

particular is effective at bridging the transition between genres, based as it is on so

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[19] Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development', p. 344.
[20] Oliver S. Buckton, *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson: Travel, Narrative, and the Colonial Body* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), p. 5.

much of Stevenson's own experiences of travel. McCracken-Flesher writes that *The Wrecker*

> expresses in full the gains of Stevenson's long work in travel writing. Stevenson termed the book 'a machine', but it was a well-oiled machine that brought together the people, the places, the experiences and the literary lessons in manner and matter that had taken approaching a lifetime to accumulate.[21]

That Stevenson is drawing on his own experiences is clear in the sections set in the artist quarters of Paris, as well in the ocean voyages and island landfalls in the Pacific. Yet it is the descriptions of America that are most reminiscent of the author's travel writing. As he crosses the country by train, the character of Loudon Dodd expresses the same dissatisfaction with swathes of the American landscape that Stevenson himself derided, terming it a 'gloomy place of travel: Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, scowled in my face at least' (*Wrecker*, 87). In *Across the Plains*, Stevenson describes the plains of Nebraska as 'a world almost without feature and the desert of Wyoming an 'unhomely and unkindly world', while despairing at the 'desolate and dreary scenes' of Utah and Nevada.[22]

Dodd, then, does not just follow the same routes as Stevenson, but makes the same observations, responds in the same way. On reaching California, he shares Stevenson's fascination with the cosmopolitan character of San Francisco:

> From what I had once called myself, *The Amateur Parisian*, I grew (or declined) into a […] scraper of acquaintance with eccentric characters. I visited Chinese and Mexican gambling-hells, German secret societies […]. Chinatown by a thousand eccentricities drew and held me; I could never have enough if its ambiguous, inter-racial atmosphere. (*Wrecker*, 115–16)

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[21] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', in *EC*, pp. 86–101 (p. 100).
[22] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Across the Plains', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. by Hart, pp. 100–47 (pp. 123, 127, 145).

Dodd's words could be Stevenson's, written over half a decade earlier, describing

'passing from a French *prix-fixe* […], to a roaring German ordinary […]', to a

'Chinese tea-house', and declaring 'of all romantic places for a boy to loiter in, that

Chinese quarter is the most romantic'.[23] Even Dodd's self-appointed title of

'Amateur Parisian' echoes Stevenson's status arriving in America as an 'Amateur

Emigrant'. In a letter to Edward L. Burlingame (the editor of *Scribner's Magazine*)

in March 1890, Stevenson admits that 'much of the experience of Loudon Dodd is

drawn from [his] own life' (*Letters*, VI, 375). Fiction, travel writing and

autobiography indeed merge when, like Stevenson, Dodd meets Charles Warren

Stoddard in California, and is similarly drawn to the South Seas from the encounter:

> It was in such talks […] that I first heard the names – first fell under the spell
> – of the islands; and it was from one of the first of them that I returned (a
> happy man) with *Omoo* under one arm, and my friend's own adventures
> under the other (*Wrecker*, 119).

It is well known that Stevenson credited his own interest in the Pacific to his

conversations with Stoddard, as well as his reading of Herman Melville. He blurs the

lines of genre even further in a letter to Colvin in September 1889, discussing the

fictional writing on the Pacific he has in draft: 'strange ways of life, I think, they set

forth: things that I can scarce touch upon, or even not at all, in my travel book'

(*Letters*, VI, 330). Here, Stevenson questions the function of stories and of travel

writing, suggesting that fiction can reflect the world just as accurately, if not more

so, than conventional informative literature.

   The Wrecker, then, can be read as a hybrid text: fictional, certainly, but it

shares elements and functions of travel writing that allow it to be considered

alongside the previous texts of this thesis without a significant shift in methodology

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[23] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'San Francisco', in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. Hart, pp. 179–87 (pp. 182, 184).

or scope. Indeed, the novel was published in a similar manner to Stevenson's South

Seas travel letters: it appeared serially in *Scribner's Magazine*, with the author

posting larger sections to the editor to be divided and published in twelve monthly

instalments. *The Wrecker* ran from August 1891 to July 1892 in *Scribner's*, and was

published in book form in June 1892, shortly before the final instalment. Charles

Scribner's Sons published the American edition, while in the UK it was taken up by

Cassells, and both editions listed Lloyd Osbourne as co-author.[24] *Scribner's* had

already published numerous essays by Stevenson and completed the serialisation of

The Master of Ballantrae (November 1888 to October 1889), when the author

wrote to Burlingame in December 1889, asking

> Will you be likely to have a space in the magazine for a serial story, which
> should be ready, I believe by April, at latest by autumn. It is called *The
> Wrecker*; and in book form will appear as Number I of 'South Sea Yarns' by
> R.L.S. and Lloyd Osbourne. (*Letters*, VI, 339)

Although Stevenson's idea that the text would make up part of a series never

materialised, he and Osbourne did have ten chapters written at the time he sent this

letter. He explained to Burlingame that 'the story is founded on fact, the mystery I

really believe to be insoluble; the purchase of a wreck has never been handled

before, no more has San Francisco. These seem all elements of success' (VI, 400).

Burlingame agreed, accepting the mystery and advancing payment before the whole

had been written (VII, 119). Already having a professional relationship with

Scribner's in place before arriving in the Pacific, this time Stevenson did not need to

send the work through mediating agents but posted it straight to the editor.

Burlingame made very few suggestions or corrections: he objected to a tone of

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[24] Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 130. It should be noted that the Tusitala edition, which I have taken as my primary text for this thesis, does not acknowledge Osbourne' co-authorship.

animosity towards Americans – which Stevenson denied but willingly amended (VI, 410) – and disliked the epilogue to Will H. Low, which was not removed (VII, 224). Indeed, it is worth noting that throughout Stevenson's career, it was his literary friends and advisors who put most pressure on the author to change his writing, and most influenced the final publications – far more so than professional agents or editors.[25]

The Wrecker is a fundamentally mobile text in many ways. Just as the book moves between the distinct features and functions of genre, so physical mobility was central to its conception and composition. Inspiration for the novel came while Stevenson and Osbourne were aboard the trading schooner *Equator*, which left Honolulu in June 1889.[26] In the epilogue to *The Wrecker*, Stevenson enters the narrative and explains its 'genesis' and 'growth' to Low:

> On board the schooner *Equator*, almost within sight of the Johnstone Islands (if anybody knows where these are) and on a moonlit night when it was a joy to be alive, the authors were amused with several stories of the sale of wrecks. The subject tempted them; and they sat apart in the alley-way to discuss its possibilities. (*Wrecker*, 404)

Conceived of and commenced while in transit, *The Wrecker* was then worked on during the eight weeks that the family stayed in Abemama in the Gilbert Islands, from August to October 1889.[27] During this period the writers were in a sort of limbo, waiting for the *Equator*, which was 'several weeks late', to pick them up.[28] Although much of Stevenson's later Pacific work was written in between periods of travel through the region, at this point the family had not yet secured a permanent residence in Samoa. *The Wrecker* was begun while the writers were still travellers,

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[25] One notable exception is 'The Beach of Falesá', which was censored by the editor, circumstances described in more detail later in the chapter.
[26] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 131.
[27] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 131.
[28] Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 391.

rather than settlers, a state mirrored in its nomadic narrative. It was even anticipated

that the text itself would afford its authors further and prolonged mobility, by

enabling the purchase of a trading schooner that would act as another source of

income for the family. Swearingen explains that the 'vessel was to be called the

Northern Light, and […] was to be purchased in part from proceeds of the new

novel.'[29] Although this idea was abandoned, the extent to which movement is

entwined with the conception of the book is significant. At the early stages of writing

The Wrecker, the authors were physically and imaginatively more concerned with

mobility than with stasis, with travel than with any fixed geographical place.

In January 1890, three months after leaving Abemama, Stevenson signed the

deeds for the purchase of Vailima Estate, in Apia, Samoa. Yet, while the authors of

The Wrecker regained a sense of stability in place, the work itself, in manuscript

form, became increasingly mobile. Osbourne had finished nearly the entire first draft

of the novel by early February 1890, and Stevenson had revised about half of this in

final form, sending the first ten chapters to Burlingame in New York on 11 March

1890 (*Letters*, VI, 375). Stevenson's revisions went slowly from this point, only

spanning a further three or four chapters during the spring and early summer. Indeed,

the rest of the book was sent in similarly small sections, written during 'three more

or less separate bursts of activity: September 1889 – March 1890 (chaps. 1–10),

autumn 1890 (through chap. 17), and summer and autumn 1891 (chaps. 18–25 and

the epilogue).'[30] Stevenson sent the final four chapters to Burlingame in November

1891 (*Letters*, VII, 188). As well as travelling to America, much of the work was

also then sent back in the form of proofs to Samoa – or Sydney, depending on

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[29] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 131.
[30] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, p. 132.

Stevenson's location at the time – and returned with corrections to New York. With

the manuscript subject to such extensive and fragmented mobility, Stevenson was

heavily dependent on the regularity and reliability of the mail services. These regular

networks of communication were one of the main reasons for which the family chose

Samoa over other islands in the region. Booth and Mehew explain how

> the mail steamers of the Oceanic Line (*Alameda, Mariposa* and *Monowai*),
> plying between San Francisco and Sydney via Honolulu and Auckland, made
> monthly delivery and collection of mailbags in Samoa. […] Letters sent by
> this means took roughly a month to reach Britain: two weeks to San
> Francisco; a week by rail across the USA to New York; and about a week to
> cross the Atlantic. (VII, 3)

Post took three weeks, then, to reach *Scribner's* in New York. Yet such back and

forth between America and Samoa was not the extent of the unpublished text's

travels: once *Scribner's* had received proofs of the final instalment of the story, they

forwarded them on to Cassell & Company in London, on Stevenson's instructions.

After two journeys from Samoa to New York and another across the Atlantic, the

book was published in Britain on 24 June 1892 to coincide with the last serial

instalment.[31]

    Owing to the authors' own movements, the challenges of distance and the

nature of serial publication, *The Wrecker* was already one of Stevenson's most

mobile and fragmented texts during its composition and production. It was made

more so, however, by the challenges of co-authorship. One of the reasons Stevenson

gave his editor for the delay on the final third of *The Wrecker* was that Osbourne was

travelling to Britain to settle the family's affairs:

> I am bothered about your delaying the publication till the tale is done; it *can't*
> be done for a good many months; six anyway. I will tell you why. Lloyd is
> off to England; he has to do the Cruise of the *Currency Lass* part in England
> (he cannot work at sea) and he is scarce there yet; it has then to come back to

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[31] Swearingen, *Prose Writings*, pp. 132–33.

> me; I have to do it; it has to go to you. That makes close to six months at the most moderate computation. (*Letters*, VII, 34)

Describing the stages of movement between place and person through which the text had to go before it would reach Burlingame, Stevenson highlighted here the extensive mobility of *The Wrecker*'s manuscript. Yet it was also *ideas* that were required to travel for this peripatetic collaboration to work: discussion of the project had to take place through correspondence while Osbourne was away (VII, 9). The extent and significance of Osbourne's contributions to the co-authored works has long been debated, following a pattern Andrew Bennett suggests has been a common practice in literary criticism:

> The significance of collaboration has […] often been elided or even denied: either the *extent* of the collaboration in a particular text is downplayed or it is argued that the aesthetic *value* of the collaborative work is compromised by its dissipation within the mind of more than one creative agent.[32]

Here, Bennett proposes that all collaboration necessarily involves more mobility of thought and ideas, even without the added challenge of distance, and is somehow considered to be a less 'authentic' process than that of a single-authored text. However, as McCracken-Flesher argues, in such a nomadic and episodic text as *The Wrecker*, 'dual authorship serves a purpose in line with the apparent character of the novel.'[33] It was, from the outset, conceived as a shared work, increasing the mobility of its composition and, perhaps, contributing to the itinerancy of its narrative.

Certainly, it is clear that the mobility inherent in the production of the book influenced the written material. Regarding writing with Osbourne, Stevenson admits that the book is 'in quite a new vein for [him]', owing to the 'method of work' springing 'from convenience in collaboration' (*Letters*, VI, 375). He argues 'it is in

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[32] Andrew Bennett, *The Author* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 95.
[33] McCracken-Flesher, 'Unplacing Space', p. 49.

the matter of the book […] that collaboration shows' (VIII, 364). In more practical terms, Osbourne's distance when he returned to Britain prevented Stevenson making changes to earlier chapters, as he needed to read the chapters Osbourne was working on at the time:

> I wish I had your narrative to help me just now for XVI […]. I would fain put in some traits, but fear to be in conflict with something in yours. This is a hell of a collaboration, half the world away. (VII, 9)

Stevenson had co-authored texts before this point and had published serially and from a distance. Nevertheless, the combination of all these factors, and in his first novel from the Pacific, presented some undeniable challenges to the author. The geographical fragmentation of the manuscript – parts in America, parts in Samoa, parts in Britain, and parts, presumably, in transit between the three – slowed the writing process. As noted above, Osbourne's trip to Europe delayed work, but even months before then Stevenson wrote to Burlingame bemoaning the difficulty of not having access to the earlier sections of the story. He declared *The Wrecker* to be 'in no forrader state than in last reports': 'I have indeed got to a period when I cannot well go on until I can refresh myself on the proofs' (VI, 392). Even more conclusive is the 'ghastly' case 'of the missing proof and letter' (VII, 197), which epitomises the perils of cross-continental publishing. Stevenson often complained about the post going missing, describing 'the magnitude of this evil' to the editor of *The Times* in 1891: 'Letters are continually delayed or reappear between this and England. I have been forced to register, and to ask my correspondents to register, all communications of the least importance' (VII, 129). In this case, chapter fifteen of *The Wrecker* for the January 1892 *Scribner's* had gone to press without Stevenson's amendments being implemented, because the corrected galley proofs he sent back to Burlingame from Samoa never arrived (VII, 197).

Reflecting on the challenging publishing process, Clare Harman suggests that the book is not 'a coherent one', and that it 'was the method of composition that made *The Wrecker* haphazard'.[34] Later in this chapter, I will argue the 'haphazard' nature of the narrative is rooted in Stevenson's exploration of the changing nature of time and space in the nineteenth century, and the significance of mobility in this global era. Yet whether the erratic storyline is considered a failure or thought to contain meaning in its own right, there is, nevertheless, a correlation between the sporadic and intensely mobile production of the text, and the associated form and content of the novel. Similarly, considering the significant challenges Stevenson faced publishing *The Wrecker*, it is unsurprising that the novel is very much concerned with the literary industry and issues of literary production. Vanessa Smith explains that 'Stevenson's prolific literary output provided the capital to finance his estate in Samoa, and it was therefore accompanied by an obsessive interest in the practical and financial aspects of literary production.'[35] The monetary value of his writing was certainly at the forefront of Stevenson's mind; he wrote to Burlingame in November 1890, threatening that if the magazine did not begin the serial publication shortly he 'must just lay *The Wrecker* aside and turn to something that will pay': 'I cannot afford to touch him, unless he begins before Easter' (*Letters*, VII, 46). Even the collaboration with Osbourne had its roots in the legalities of nineteenth-century publishing: as Smith explains, the 'joint authorship was a business venture', Osbourne's American citizenship giving the text 'the protection of United States copyright laws prior to the International Copyright Act of July 1891.'[36]

Within the novel itself, literary culture is significant: Glenda Norquay

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[34] Harman, *Stevenson*, pp. 386–87.
[35] Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 11.
[36] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 147.

identifies how 'questions around the quality of our reading are explicitly flagged' in the novel.[37] The 'class' of literature available in the South Seas is a recurrent topic, revealing a concern about the relationship between 'quality' literature and success in the literary marketplace. Dodd compares his 'Renaissance French' texts with the 'Seaside Library novels', which the 'beachcombers' covet, while the merits of the 'dime-novel' are repeatedly debated (*Wrecker*, 7, 11). Perhaps conscious of its place in this dichotomy, *The Wrecker* refers to its own central mystery as 'the dime novel' (p. 229); it asserts that 'dime novels are right enough', except 'that things happen thicker than they do in life' (p. 230). In the epilogue, a fictional Stevenson, who knows Dodd 'so is within the fiction but can also comment on publication and genre from an external position', describes the process through which *The Wrecker* was written.[38] He dedicates the text to Will Low in a confusing blend of fiction and reality. The 'yarn of Loudon Dodd, not as he told it to his friend, but as he subsequently wrote it' is specifically a written rather than an oral narrative, and Stevenson claims to have become 'mixed up with […] Dodd in the design to publish' it (pp. 14, 403). In addition to such print cultural concerns, he discusses 'the genesis and growth of *The Wrecker*', revealing how he combined 'the police novel or mystery story' with 'a novel of manners' (pp. 404, 405). There is a defensive note in this explanation; even as Stevenson dedicates the novel to Low he denigrates its worth, suggesting that Low is appropriate because of his interest 'in all problems of art, even the most vulgar' (p. 404). He anticipates Low's reaction, admitting there 'is a prodigious quantity of theory to our halfpenny worth of a police novel' (p. 405). This extended explanation, which continues over three pages, reads like a premature

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[37] Norquay, *Reader as Vagabond*, p. 191.
[38] Norquay, *Reader as Vagabond*, p. 189.

defence to anticipated criticism and perhaps reveals the concerns Stevenson had over

connecting imaginatively with his readers from such a distance.

Journalism also plays a key role in the narrative. Newspapers are central to

the mystery of the *Flying Scud* – it is the presence of the *Sydney Morning Herald*

that confirms the forgery in the ship's logs:

> [N]ot thirteen days after this paper appeared in New South Wales, the ship
> we're standing in heaved her blessed anchors out of China? How did the
> *Sydney Morning Herald* get to Hong Kong in thirteen days? Trent made no
> land, he spoke no ship, till he got here. (p. 212)

It is also in a newspaper that the protagonists first hear about the sale of the wreck.

Dodd describes the publication in question, revealing contempt for the profession of

journalist as he does so:

> This was a paper (I know not if it be so still) that stood out alone among its
> brethren in the West; the others, down to their smallest item, were defaced
> with capitals, head lines, alliterations, swaggering misquotations, and the
> shoddy, picturesque, and unpathetic pathos of the Harry Millers: the
> *Occidental* alone appeared to be written by a dull, sane, Christian gentleman,
> singly desirous of communicating knowledge. (p. 127)

Indeed, Jolly suggests that Stevenson mocks 'the world of modern journalism'

through the character of Pinkerton, who is 'ever ready to produce copy on subjects of

which he knows nothing, in order to feed the public's insatiable hunger for

information-as-commodity'.[39] As Stevenson declared, some of the key characters are

'devilish recognisable' (*Letters*, VI, 376), and Pinkerton himself is 'based upon a

figure from the world of metropolitan publishing', the American literary agent S.S.

McClure.[40] Yet, as well as mocking the newspaper business through Pinkerton, his

brief journalistic career also reflects the challenges with cross-continental publishing

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[39] Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 76.
[40] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 149.

that Stevenson experienced. During their time in Paris, Dodd discovers that

Pinkerton has written an article about him and his artwork for an American

newspaper, the 'St Jo *Sunday Herald*', to which he greatly objects. Pinkerton claims

that he 'would stop it' if he could, 'only it's too late; it's almost published by now'

(*Wrecker*, 47). Here, Dodd shares the frustrations Stevenson expressed upon

discovering the missing proof: to find his work had gone to press without his final

approval and being far too distant to prevent it.

The parallels between Dodd's and Stevenson's experiences with the press

extend beyond their similar encounter with the perils of intercontinental publishing.

Only weeks before boarding the *Equator*, where *The Wrecker* was conceived,

Stevenson wrote to Charles Baxter from Hawaii, asserting his 'perfect right to object

to the publication of private letters':

> [W]hether the public wants to read them or not is nothing to the purpose. To
> the public I may be an object of unwholesome curiosity; to my private
> friends, I would like to remain a private friend […]. It may seem hard to
> conceive but I like my doings being published just as little as you would. –
> Ah, you say, and you are going to write a book about them! – Even so,
> Charles; but then I shall choose for myself. (*Letters*, VI, 315)

Just as Dodd 'point[s] out to [Pinkerton] that he had no right to' publish information

about him 'without asking [his] permission' (p. 46), Stevenson has to remind his

friends of his right to privacy. This problem is specific to his time in the Pacific and

is made manifest in his first novel from the region. As Jolly points out, the idea of

Robert Louis Stevenson living in 'Samoa provoked enormous public interest'; there

was a substantial 'appetite for news of his exotic new life, his house, and his

domestic relationships'.[41] Edmund Gosse wrote to him in 1893 declaring: 'Since

Byron was in Greece, nothing has appealed to the ordinary literary man as so

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[41] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. 159.

picturesque as that you should be in the South Seas.'[42] Evidence of this fascination is

found in a letter Stevenson wrote to the editor of the *New York World* in 1891,

complaining about a description of Vailima and the family that the paper had

published, which was made up of 'wanton absurdities'. He states that 'of late the

papers have been somewhat busy with myself and my family' and begs the readers

'to disregard such unauthorised publications' (*Letters*, VII, 206). This frustration

with the press and the public's desire to read more about *himself* than about the

Pacific was evident in my previous chapter, when Colvin's calls for a more

'personal' travel narrative in the South Seas letters prompted the outburst: 'As for

telling you where I went or when […] I would rather die; that is fair and plain' (VII,

157). Preferring to focus on the conditions of the islands than his movements

between them, Stevenson rejects the demands to put more of his own person in the

letters. Fiction again reflects life when his opinions are echoed in Dodd's

instructions to Pinkerton in *The Wrecker*: 'the next time you wish to do me a service,

just speak about my work; leave my wretched person out' (p. 49).

　　The Wrecker, then, reveals a pervasive interest in the literary marketplace and

explores many of the same publishing problems that Stevenson faced during his

years in the Pacific. As noted above, he relied on his literary output in Britain and

America to finance his life overseas, ensuring the practicalities of professional

authorship were a consistent topic in his correspondence. Yet, in terms of his

published writing from the region, it is only in *The Wrecker* that this preoccupation

with the literary industry emerges. Although 'The Bottle Imp' was published in 1891

(in the *New York Herald* and *Black and White* in London) before the novel began its

serialisation, the writing of *The Wrecker* started first: it was the first fictional text

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[42] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. 162.

Stevenson conceived of in the Pacific. Perhaps it was the early stage of the author's time in the region (the novel was started before he had even made the decision to settle there) that makes *The Wrecker* so attuned to issues of publication. Certainly, there is evidence in his correspondence that Stevenson was concerned about being able to connect with his readership from so great a distance. During the same period on Abemama when Stevenson and Osbourne wrote the first ten chapters of the text, Stevenson expressed to Colvin his growing sense of separation from the reading public:

> I wonder what has befallen me too, that flimsy part of me that lives (or dwindles) in the public mind; and what has befallen *The Master*, and what kind of a Box *The Wrong Box* has been found? It is odd knowing nothing of all this. (*Letters*, VI, 329)

Eleven months later, in a letter to Burlingame that introduces the idea of a new series of papers for *Scribner's* and reports on the progress of *The Wrecker*, Stevenson questions if it is

> possible for a man in Samoa to be in touch with the great heart of the People? And is it not perhaps a mere folly to attempt, from so hopeless a distance, anything so delicate as a series of papers? (VI, 391)

This concern about the 'hopeless distance' separating himself from his readers was not unfounded. Jolly explains:

> the difficulty Stevenson faced as a Pacific author with an English and American readership: in Samoa his points of reference, and his sense of proportion and perspective, changed in ways that readers in the northern hemisphere could not always understand.[43]

Indeed, the public's fascination with the author's life coincided with a growing distaste for some of his published work. I have already examined the negative responses to Stevenson's experiments with travel writing in his South Seas letters;

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[43] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. vii.

these unenthusiastic reviews also greeted his subsequent factual and political work

on the region, such as his letters to *The Times* and *A Footnote to History* (1892).

Oscar Wilde summed up the disappointment expressed by many of Stevenson's

readers when he suggested that 'romantic surroundings' must be 'the worst

surroundings possible for a romantic writer': 'In Gower Street Stevenson could have

written a new *Trois Mousquetaires*. In Samoa he wrote letters to *The Times* about

Germans.'[44] Even Stevenson's fictional writing about the South Seas alienated many

of his readers at home: *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and a Quartette* (1894) was considered

'sordidly realistic', focusing as it does on the immoral behaviour of British and

European subjects in the Pacific.[45]

    The Wrecker itself did not generate such widespread negativity. Some readers

objected to the incoherence of the mobile narrative, but *The Scotsman* pronounced it

'the best book Stevenson had yet produced' (*CH*, 396) and Osbourne describes how

it was always in excellent demand, rivalling *Kidnapped*, *Master of Ballantrae*, and

Catriona in terms of royalties, earning £200 a year with unvarying regularity.[46] Yet,

while the responses to this book do not reveal the growing divide (geographically

and imaginatively) between the author and his readers, it is in *The Wrecker* that

concerns about the division are manifested. Unlike 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892) and

The Ebb-Tide, this novel is not concerned with the political environment of the

South Seas. It is issues of literary production rather than colonial exploitation that

are explored in *The Wrecker* – Stevenson's preoccupation in this text not the Pacific

islanders, but the book-buying public overseas. Considering the intense mobility and

fragmentation that attended its production, alongside the fact that it was Stevenson's

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[44] Oscar Wilde, quoted in Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 14.
[45] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. 157.
[46] McCracken-Fletcher, 'Travel Writing', p. 100.

first attempt to connect imaginatively with readers from the Pacific, it is perhaps unsurprising that *The Wrecker* is less concerned with the region itself than with its place in a global system of networks, less focused on the South Sea islands than with how they connect with the rest of world.

'[T]he unrest and movement of our century': Mobility, Speed and Time–Space Compression in *The Wrecker*

As well as being one of Stevenson's most mobile texts in its composition and production, *The Wrecker* is also the most peripatetic of all the author's narratives (see Figure 6, overleaf). Framed within the Pacific settings of the prologue and epilogue, the main story of *The Wrecker* tracks Loudon Dodd's movements between America, France and Britain, then back to America and on to the Pacific. Dodd returns to America before travelling back to Britain and finally France in search of Norris Carthew and the solution to the mystery. The narrative then switches to Carthew's equally peripatetic adventures: his interpolated story moving from Britain to Australia and through the Pacific islands, journeying back to Europe before he necessarily departs for Persia, required to keep moving to avoid the demands of a blackmailer. The story ends with Dodd earning a mobile living on a trading schooner, as Stevenson and Osbourne had once wished for themselves. Stevenson himself enters the narrative in the epilogue where he meets Dodd, who is on his way to New Zealand, in Manihiki (one of the remotest inhabited islands in the Pacific Ocean). Just as the manuscript of *The Wrecker* travelled between countries, so too do the characters follow the same ocean routes in this narrative of perpetual motion.
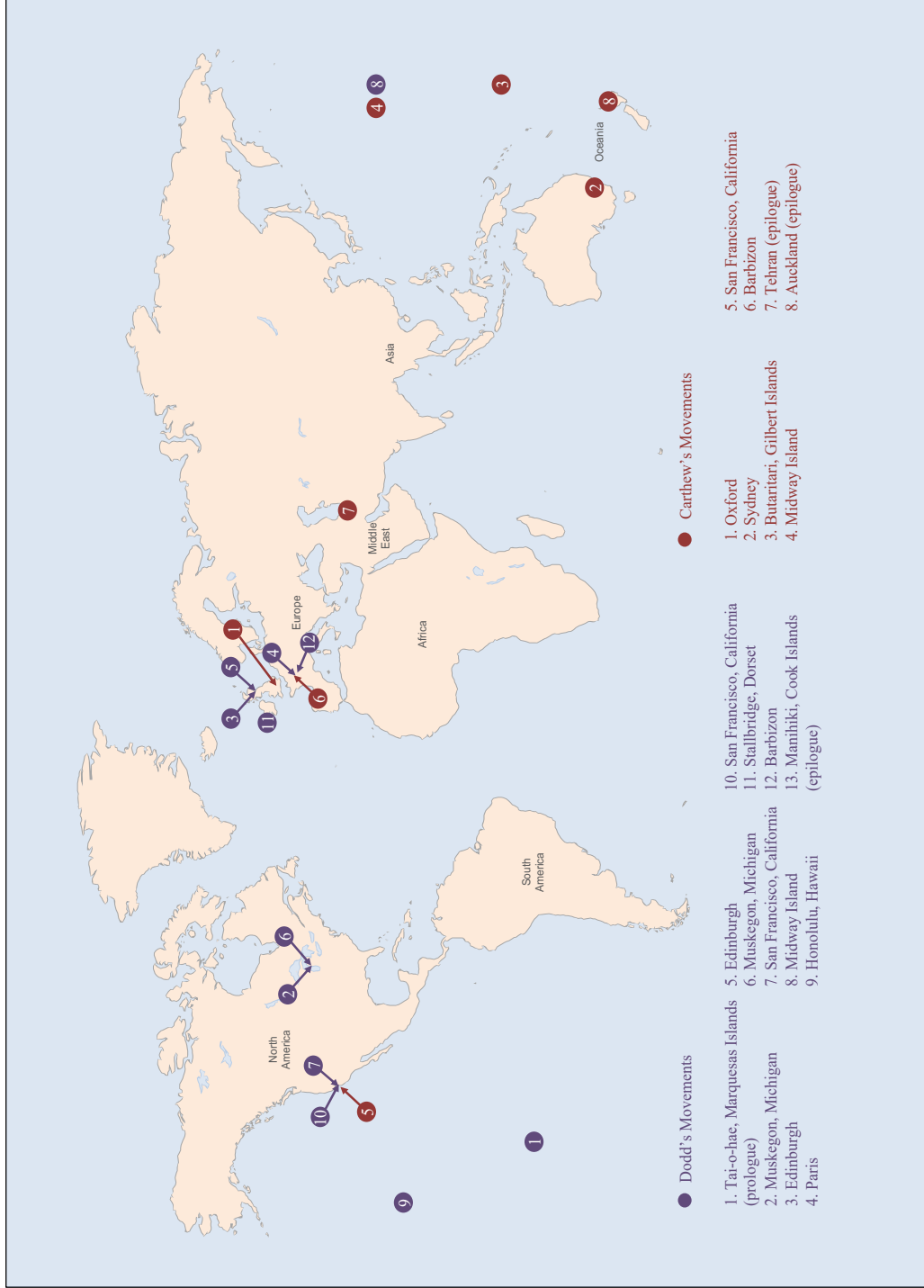
Figure 6. Map illustrating the narrative movements of Loudon Dodd and Norris Carthew, in *The Wrecker* (1892).

Dodd's Movements

1. Tai-o-hae, Marquesas Islands (prologue)
2. Muskegon, Michigan
3. Edinburgh
4. Paris
5. Edinburgh
6. Muskegon, Michigan
7. San Francisco, California
8. Midway Island
9. Honolulu, Hawaii
10. San Francisco, California
11. Stallbridge, Dorset
12. Barbizon
13. Manihiki, Cook Islands (epilogue)

Carthew's Movements

1. Oxford
2. Sydney
3. Butaritari, Gilbert Islands
4. Midway Island
5. San Francisco, California
6. Barbizon
7. Tehran (epilogue)
8. Auckland (epilogue)

Indeed, the geographical fragmentation of the manuscript that such motion caused is mirrored in the narrative: the reader is propelled from continent to continent; in one instance, the setting jumps from Scotland to America within the space of a sentence. Dodd is in conversation with his Scottish grandfather and in the next line informs us, 'I had a second and sadder experience of graveyards at my next alighting-place, the city of Muskegon' (*Wrecker*, 85), and the narrative continues in America. The structure of the novel is similarly fragmented through the framing technique of the prologue and epilogue. The central story is being told from Tai-o-hae in the Marquesas and the reader is occasionally jolted across time and space in Dodd's narration: 'Here in the South Seas we talk schooners most of the time; in the Quarter we talked art with the like unflagging interest' (p. 54). The sudden shift in tense and location reminds readers of the split narrative structure, transporting them from Paris to the Pacific and back again, adding a further disorientating element to this already frenetically mobile text.

That is not to say, however, that the novel neglects to describe all movement or journeys between places. In fact, as I shall demonstrate later in this chapter, modes of transport are a central concern of the narrative. One journey in particular that is described in detail is the voyage of the *Norah Creina*: a fourteen-page chapter is devoted to this passage from San Francisco to Midway Island in the Pacific. The journey, which Stevenson did not feel was necessary to describe in his South Seas letters, is related through the mode of fiction in *The Wrecker*, as Dodd recounts the 'day after day' of 'trade wind clouds', 'the squall' and the 'small, busy, and deliberate world of the schooner' (p. 179). He confesses

> it was before I had ever seen an island worthy of the name that I must date my loyalty to the South Seas. The blank sea itself grew desirable under such skies: and wherever the trade wind blows, I know no better country than a schooner's deck […] (p. 180)

Dodd's words here seem to echo Stevenson's own sentiments in a letter to Henry

James in 1890:

> These last two years I have been much at sea, and I have *never wearied*,
> sometimes I have indeed grown impatient for some destination; more often I
> was sorry that the voyage drew so early to an end; and never once did I lose
> my fidelity to blue water and a ship. (*Letters*, VI, 403)

Whereas *In the South Seas* is far more concerned with the islands themselves than

the travellers' movements between them, this priority is reversed in *The Wrecker*.

Even when the *Norah Creina* makes landfall, it is not Midway Island that is the

destination but another vessel: 'It was a relief when […] I might drop into the boat

and move off at last for the *Flying Scud*' (p. 196). In the chapters that follow ('The

Cabin of the "Flying Scud"', 'The Cargo of the "Flying Scud"'), the island is barely

mentioned. In a novel that privileges movement over stasis, descriptions of mobility

over details of place, the island's significance is minimal when compared to that of

the ship, even one 'stationary at last and for ever, in the first stage of naval

dissolution' (p. 195).

As well as this marked difference to *In the South Seas*, *The Wrecker*'s lack of

interest in Pacific life and culture sets it apart from Stevenson's later fictional work.

Both 'The Beach of Falesá' and *The Ebb-Tide* explore the pernicious influence and

behaviour of Western colonists in the region, while reflecting many of the cultural

details which Stevenson recorded in his anthropological letters of travel. Stevenson

himself described 'The Beach of Falesá' as 'extraordinarily *true*: it's sixteen pages

of the South Seas: their essence' (*Letters*, VII, 155):

> It is the first realistic South Sea story; I mean with real South Sea character
> and details of life; everybody else who has tried, that I have seen, got carried
> away by the romance and ended in a kind of sugar candy sham epic […] You
> will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale, than
> if you had read a library […] (VII, 161)

Stevenson must have been including himself and *The Wrecker* in this assessment of

unrealistic South Seas stories: this letter was written to Colvin in October 1891, one

month before Stevenson sent the final chapters of the novel to Burlingame. Indeed,

not only does *The Wrecker* lack any imperial critique or specific cultural details of

the Pacific, the narrative is barely stationary long enough for indigenous cultures or

characters to feature at all. Where Pacific Islanders do appear, it is almost invariably

in homogeneous groups described in clichéd terms, such as the 'brown-skinned, soft-

spoken, sweet-eyed native sailors' (*Wrecker*, 117) whom Dodd watches in the San

Francisco port. In her discussion of light and shadow in Stevenson's Pacific texts,

Ann Colley argues that, 'like the native women in *The Wrecker* who "came by twos

and threes out of the darkness" […], his characters emerge as if from oblivion onto

the brilliant text', stimulating 'Stevenson to explore the mystery of what surrounds

them'.[47] While this analysis may fit the majority of his South Seas works, *The*

Wrecker is a poor example: the indigenous population certainly do not emerge into

the light of this text, but are barely visible through the novel's interweaving

narratives. In the extract that Colley quotes, the 'native women' are not identified in

any more detail, but move through the page in groups of 'twos and threes': they

simply 'smiled and ogled the two whites, perhaps wooed them with a strain of

laughter, and went by again, bequeathing to the air a heady perfume of palm-oil and

frangipani blossom' (*Wrecker*, 13).

Nor does the narrative seem stimulated to explore these characters'

surroundings. In fact, the first 'image of the islands' is delivered second-hand,

through the 'long tales' of old South Seas traders, 'talking of another world' from a

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[47] Ann C. Colley, 'Light, Darkness, and Shadow: Stevenson in the South Seas', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 181–89 (p. 182).

public house in San Francisco (p. 123). It is from these romanticised reminiscences that Dodd first begins to 'piece […] together' a picture of 'island life':

> the unending peace of the lagoon; sun, moon, and stars of an imperial brightness; man moving in these scenes scarce fallen, and woman lovelier than Eve; the primal curse abrogated, the bed made ready for the stranger, life set to perpetual music, and the guest welcomed, the boat urged, and the long night beguiled, with poetry and choral song […] (pp. 123–24)

In stark contrast with the anthropological details of the South Seas letters and the critique of colonialism in 'The Beach of Falesá', these clichéd scenes can hardly be considered insights into Pacific life and culture. Even when Dodd arrives in Hawaii, only the briefest 'pictures of native life' are offered (p. 248), before the narrative returns to the pressing concerns of its Western characters. Almost the entire portrayal of the island is condensed into one sentence, as he describes:

> wide-eyed, naked children, mingled with pigs; a youth asleep under a tree; an old gentleman spelling through glasses his Hawaiian Bible; the somewhat embarrassing spectacle of a lady at her bath in a spring; and the glimpse of gaudy-coloured gowns in the deep shade of the houses. (p. 248)

These snapshots of island life are not even afforded individual sentences but are grouped together in one, only loosely separated by the repeated semicolons. As Jolly states, 'Stevenson's [own] early perceptions of the Pacific were influenced by the Romantic primitivism of writers such as Herman Melville and Charles Warren Stoddard'.[48] When Dodd meets Stoddard in San Francisco, the autobiographical relation to Stevenson is apparent, as he too falls 'under the spell […] of the islands' before setting foot in them (p. 119). Unlike Stevenson, however, who in other texts abandons his primitivist position to depict the complexities of Pacific culture, Dodd is ultimately unable to move past these initial utopian visions, leaving *The Wrecker* with only the most fleeting, romanticised glimpse of this island world.

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[48] Jolly, 'Stevenson and the Pacific', p. 119.

In fact, while *The Wrecker* is consistently grouped with Stevenson's 'Pacific fiction' (stories written in and about the region), a case could be made that this novel is not about the Pacific at all. As Jolly states, in this novel it is

> the ports [that] define the region so that the geographic reference points in *The Wrecker* are Melbourne (p. 195), Sydney (p. 233), Hong Kong (p. 415), 'Calcutta and Rangoon and 'Frisco and the Canton River' (p. 216). This is not really the Pacific, but the Pacific Rim, within which the ocean, which carries the shipping of international trade, is far more important than the islands those ships pass. [49]

While *In the South Seas* is concerned with how colonial and commercial expansion affects the cultures and politics of the Pacific, *The Wrecker* is more concerned with the system of globalisation itself than its effects on the region, exploring how the dynamic forces of modernity are shaping the global culture of the nineteenth century. Even in the fleeting sketches of island life provided in *The Wrecker*, the cosmopolitanism Dodd (and Stevenson) depict in San Francisco is evident in the Pacific. In the prologue the text describes the 'Cercle Internationale' (*Wrecker*, 9), comprised of the 'various English, Americans, Germans, Poles, Corsicans, and Scots' (p. 5) who frequent the trading ports of the Pacific.

If on land these communities fall into clearly identifiable national groups, the mobility on board a ship seems to generate a corresponding mobility of national identity. Dodd describes his uncertainty concerning an officer on the *Norah Creina*:

> I could never learn this man's country; and though he himself claimed to be an American, neither his English nor his education warranted the claim. In all likelihood he was of Scandinavian birth and blood, long pickled in the forecastles of English and American ships. It is possible that, like so many of his race in similar positions, he had already lost his native tongue. In mind at least, he was quite denationalised. (pp. 121–22)

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[49] Jolly, 'Stevenson and the Pacific', pp. 129–30.

John Mack explains that, 'far from being uniform communities, ships' crews […]

have often been very diverse in their composition', arguing that 'ships are the first

truly cosmopolitan spaces.'[50] The mobility of ships and people is central to *The*

Wrecker's narrative and the potentially destabilising effects these can have on

national identity is a recurrent theme. The key mystery of the plot hinges on a racial

ambiguity on board a ship: Dodd first suspects the crew of the *Flying Scud* of

deception because 'the cook is not a Chinaman', as reported, but 'a Kanaka' (p.

129).

Steer recognises that 'the main characters of […] *The Wrecker* have all

abandoned their nations for a maritime world', suggesting that Stevenson's focus on

the topic derives 'in large part because his settlement in Samoa coincided with the

establishment in 1889 of the island group as a "tridominium," a unique example of a

joint British, German, and United States protectorateship under nominal indigenous

rule'.[51] This layering of national interests on one island may well have heightened

Stevenson's interest in the potential instability of national identity in a rapidly

changing, globalised world. Yet we have also seen, in previous chapters, that the

author was questioning the distinctions of nationality some ten years earlier,

following his first trip to America. This suggests that *The Wrecker*'s concern with

ambiguous nationalities is less to do with one country and more to do with the global

conditions of modernity that Stevenson saw shaping the nineteenth century: mobile

people in a connected world.

Certainly, with these repeated uncertainties regarding national identity, *The*

Wrecker does not present a vision of a coherent national enterprise influencing the

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[50] John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), p. 137.
[51] Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development', pp. 348–49.

region. Rather, the individual actions of Western subjects drive the narrative around the world and into the Pacific: these are not figures of colonial authority but opportunists, 'whom the tide of commerce or the chances of shipwreck and desertion [have] stranded on the beach' (*Wrecker*, 9). Before even seeing 'an island worthy of the name', Dodd declares that 'wherever the trade-wind blows, I know no better country than a schooner's deck' (p. 180). If there is a force driving the foreign residents of this region, it is not national pride and imperial expansion, but 'the tide of commerce' and the opportunities of global capitalism, the allure of international trade and financial gain. Cohen notes the 'seeming lack of interest in work' as a topic in the genre of the novel. She argues, however, that the forms that do 'showcase work are not the novels of manners […] but adventure forms like maritime fiction', where work appears 'in the guise of craft'. Through these skills and practices necessary for oceangoing survival, Cohen suggests that 'sea adventure novels glorif[y] work': it 'can be dramatized and distilled into an ethos, giving it transcendence beyond the bare struggle for subsistence'. [52] Despite its preoccupation with maritime travel, *The Wrecker* does not conform to this model: there is little 'craft' demonstrated in the narrative. The work, instead, that interests this novel is that which generates money, either through financial speculation or an exploitative system of trade. The pursuit of wealth drives the mobile narrative: whether it is Dodd in search of the wreck, Carthew's attempt at island trading, or Bellair's relentless pursuit of Carthew with the aim of blackmail, the characters of this novel continuously chase capital around the world.

While presented as an accurate reflection of the proliferating global economy in the nineteenth century, this form of work is certainly not glorified in *The Wrecker*.

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[52] Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, p. 12.

One of the first conversations in the book is that between the international circle of characters gathered in Tai-o-hae. They discuss the different varieties of 'good business', all of which involve, to a greater or lesser extent, the exploitation of the inhabitants or environment of the Pacific. One declares there is 'a good deal in opium'; another 'know[s] nothing better than a schooner, a competent captain, and a sound, reliable reef'; while a third declares that 'nobody makes anything but the missionaries' (p. 10). The narrator of the prologue gives some background to this conversation, suggesting that after 'a year or so in the island world' the European will become 'used to a certain laxity of moral tone which prevails […] on smuggling, ship-scuttling, barratry, piracy, the labour trade, and other kindred fields of human activity' (p. 10). In some ways, Stevenson could here be seen to engage in the nineteenth-century discourse of degeneration, something he does to great effect and most famously in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Elleke Boehmer explains how, at a time when Social Darwinism was popular in Britain, constant 'anxiety was expressed about the degeneration allegedly caused […] by the proximity to savage passions, or simply by the malign influence of the alien environment.'[53] Certainly, *The Wrecker*'s narrator suggests that the environment of the Pacific will dilute the moral certainty of its international inhabitants. Significantly, however, the activities he describes are not the cultural practices of Pacific islanders, but the unauthorised commercial operations of white settlers and traders. Unlike novels of imperial romance such as Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), capital gain is not linked with imperial adventure: indeed, if anything poses a threat to white selfhood in the Pacific, the

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[53] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 68–69.

narrative here implies it is the corrupting influence of global capitalism on renegade European subjects.

It is also worth noting that all these activities – 'smuggling, ship-scuttling, barratry, piracy, the labour trade' – are quintessentially mobile practices. And while the novel questions the ethics of such labour, it also depicts the alternative – a life of stasis – as untenable within the fast-paced global economy of the nineteenth century. On board the *Norah Creina*, Captain Nares asserts that 'two years' in the Pacific can 'shake the grit out of a man' (*Wrecker*, 180). He gives the example of an affluent 'townie' he 'lost' to the islands, who 'prefers the beach, and hot rolls off the breadfruit trees' to working on his father's 'coasting craft Down East'. Nares presents a clear dichotomy between a mobile existence of commercial enterprise and a life of unproductive stasis. Thus, while the narrative may appear to disapprove of immoral mobile practices, the alternative seems to constitute a rejection of capitalism and the principles of 'progress' on which modern society is based. We see another example of limited mobility associated with a lack of drive and productivity in the figure of the aspiring artist Carthew. His father disapproves so vehemently of his chosen profession that he would prefer him, as Jolly puts it, 'to live a life of aimless parasitism […] as a remittance-man in New South Wales' than to work for his living as an artist in Britain:[54]

> An allowance of three hundred pounds in the year was to be paid to him quarterly by a lawyer in Sydney, New South Wales. He was not to write. Should he fail on any quarter-day to be in Sydney, he was to be held for dead and the allowance tacitly withdrawn. Should he return to Europe, an advertisement publicly disowning him was to appear in every paper of repute. (*Wrecker*, 321)

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[54] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. 20.

This remittance, with the geographical restrictions that attend it, confines Carthew to a life of relative stasis; without the mobility that the text links with productivity, he soon finds 'himself reduced, […] to herd and camp with the degraded outcasts of the city' (p. 321).

Significantly, it is through the transport industry that this aimless existence is eventually replaced with a sense of direction. Carthew is advised that 'the railway system daily required more hands' (p. 325); he joins the team constructing and maintaining the line and is successful in the labour:

> he enjoyed a peace of mind and health of body hitherto unknown. […] here was what had been hitherto lacking in that misdirected life, and the true cure of vital scepticism. To get the train through: there was the recurrent problem; no time remained to ask if it was necessary. Carthew, the idler, the spendthrift, the drifting dilettante, was soon remarked, praised, and advanced. (p. 326)

It is through the railways, the symbol of mobility and progress in the nineteenth century, that the 'drifting dilettante' finally achieves a sense of purpose. From this moment on, Carthew stops 'drifting', and his movement acquires drive and direction. He returns to Sydney with 'a chance to get on in the world', by being a 'part owner of a ship' and making 'a six-months' cruise of it [trading] among the islands' (pp. 338–39). Although this means breaking the requirements of the remittance, Carthew declares he is 'fond of three hundred a year […] but cannot pay the price required' (p. 340): the price of restricted mobility and the limited opportunities this presents. Jolly links Carthew's regeneration through working on the railway with a restoration of masculinity and vocation. She claims that 'the problem of vocation is closely associated here with the problem of achieving masculinity', suggesting that Carthew is 'awakened to a sense of purpose and dignity by working as a manual labourer'.[55]

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[55] Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific,* p. 20.

Yet the *type* of labour is just as significant here: it is not building a house (a symbol

of settledness) that inspires Carthew, but working the railways – he himself admits:

'that railway was the making of me' (*Wrecker*, 328). Mobility is integral to the

restoration of his productivity and self-worth; his forfeiting of the remittance money

in order to earn a living through trade is a clear statement in favour of productive

mobility over settledness and stasis. It is not a coincidence that, even after he has

'come into [his] kingdom' (p. 395), gaining independence through inheritance

following his father's death, he sets himself up 'running a trader' in the South Seas

as the owner of a yacht (p. 401).

While *The Wrecker* does portray the restricted opportunities that attend

limited movement, this does not extend to a critique of the inequality as regards who

has access to such mobility. When examining the intense developments and

increased availability of transport in the nineteenth century, it is important to

acknowledge that this new era of mobility was not accessible to all. As Doreen

Massey states:

> Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-
> differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some
> initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving
> end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.[56]

The Wrecker, with its intensely peripatetic Western characters, has the potential to

question how this continuous movement through the Pacific has an impact on the

indigenous population. Yet, as in other matters related to the environment of the

Pacific and its native inhabitants, Stevenson defers such considerations to his travel

letters and later fictions. In the previous chapter, I explored how, historically, the

Pacific was a large space 'in which people and cultures moved and mingled, trading

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[56] Doreen Massey, 'Power-Geometry and Progressive Sense of Place', in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, ed. by Jon Bird, et al. (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 59–69 (p. 61).

and extending social networks [...]. The so-called boundaries of islands were points of exit and entry rather than frontiers, and the sea was open to anyone who could navigate'.[57] In *In the South Seas*, Stevenson recognises that the historic mobility of Pacific islanders is being restricted: he describes how the French colonial government in Tahiti 'issued a decree' stipulating that

> [a]ll land in the Paumotus must be defined and registered by a certain date. Now, the folk of the archipelago are half nomadic; a man can scarce be said to belong to a particular atoll; he belongs to several, perhaps holds a stake and counts cousinship in half a score; [...] [but] were all now engaged in disputing boundaries [...] (*ISS,* 121)

The global mobility of Europeans that enabled imperialism had in turn curtailed the cultural mobility of the indigenous people, imposing national boundaries and regulating movement between them. As Cresswell states, 'mobility is more than just about getting from A to B. It is about the contested world of meaning and power. It is about mobilities rubbing up against each other and causing friction.'[58] In *In the South Seas*, Stevenson explains that 'Fakarava was chosen to be the seat of Government' for that island group because 'in all states of the wind it can be left and entered, and this advantage, for a government of scattered islands was decisive' (p. 115). He recognises the significance of mobility for the French government while acknowledging their suppression of cultural, mobile practices in the Pacific, offering a clear example of conflicting mobilities causing friction.

In *The Wrecker*, however, the restricted mobility Stevenson depicts is that of his European and American characters, and it is related neither to political nor cultural issues, but to money. Just as Carthew is confined to Sydney through dependence on his remittance, his subsequent inherited wealth enables almost

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[57] Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (eds), 'Introduction' in *Islands in History and Representation* (London: Routeledge, 2003), pp. 1–18 (p. 9).
[58] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 265.

unlimited mobility. He is able to repeatedly escape Bellairs, his blackmailer, whose

relative poverty prevents him from competing with Carthew's constant movement.

When asked how he evades the blackmailer, Carthew simply replies: 'He's poor, and

I'm rich. […] I go somewhere else, that's all – somewhere that's far and dear to get

to. Persia would be found to answer' (*Wrecker*, 401). As John Urry states, 'moving

between places physically or virtually can be a source of status and power';[59]

Carthew employs it here to retain power over the 'mobility poor' Bellairs, who, if he

had been able to reach him, had the means to ruin Carthew. Instead, Carthew ends

the novel with his freedom intact, still travelling, while Bellairs had 'returned

somehow to San Francisco and died in the hospital' (*Wrecker*, 401). The novel does

not explore or comment on this relationship between money, mobility and power,

but merely presents it as fact, a condition of global capitalism in the nineteenth

century.

Mobility and capitalism are indeed closely linked: as Marx and Engels state

in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), 'the need of a constantly expanding market for

its products, chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must

nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere'.[60] Paul

Young explains that 'what Marx and Engels held to be self-sufficient economic

seclusion was supplanted by transglobal networks of exchange, and "production and

consumption in every country" was given a "cosmopolitan character"'.[61] This link

between money and mobility is portrayed in *The Wrecker*, when Dodd dabbles in the

most capitalist of trades, stocks and shares:

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[59] John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 9.
[60] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto' (1848), in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 221–45 (pp. 224–25).
[61] Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 8

> Dollars of mine were tacking off the shores of Mexico, in peril of the deep
> and the guarda-costas; they rang on saloon-counters in the city of Tombstone,
> Arizona; they shone in faro-tents among the mountain diggings: the
> imagination flagged in following them, so wide were they diffused […] (pp.
> 110–11).

Here, the text depicts the mobility inherent in capitalism and the global reach of

wealth, producing profit even while it 'whirled beyond reach and even sight' (p.

110).

The movement of money is certainly a central feature of the novel. Duncan

goes as far as to suggest that 'the narrative tracks a planetary movement of capital

rather than of persons – or rather, circulations and fluctuations of capital to the which

the "singular zigzags" of the tale's human subjects are accessory.'[62] This assessment,

however, implies too much of a clear distinction between money and movement,

between the 'circulations and fluctuations of capital' and the developments of human

mobility. In *The Wrecker*, there is an inextricable connection between money and

mobility; Kern explains how, in reality, they are difficult to separate:

> In the complex interaction between need and technological invention, it is
> difficult to identify one or the other exclusively as causal. The railroad
> responded to economic need and in turn had an enormous impact on
> economic life. In a similar manner electronic communication related to the
> creation of worldwide markets.[63]

There are indeed fluctuations of capital in *The Wrecker*, and the circulation of money

does drive the human subjects of the novel. Yet, just as frequently, it is the human

modes of transport and the movements of characters that generate the capital, that

move the money. In addition to the railway labour that rescues Carthew from

destitution, the vast majority of profitable activities in the novel involve forms of

vehicles. Pinkerton begins a business in 'refitting […] condemned ships', before

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[62] Duncan, 'Stevenson and Fiction', p. 24.
[63] Kern, *Time and Space*, p. 214.

Dodd insists he 'will not make money by risking men's lives' (*Wrecker*, 99). This
venture transitions into the business of 'wrecking', an industry based solely on
extracting the maximum value from shipwrecked vessels. I have already detailed the
various trading enterprises that are embarked on throughout the narrative, and even
the highly profitable 'Hebdomadary Picnics' involve tours on a 'goodly steamer' (p.
102). Tim Cresswell explains how

> [t]he railroad was central to the development of the [American] national
> economy within a global system. One railroad historian has gone so far as to
> state that 'The railroad encouraged and gave birth to what we so proudly
> refer to as the free enterprise system.'[64]

Although referring specifically to the railroad network of the United States,
Cresswell demonstrates the inextricable and reciprocal link between economic
growth and developments in transport. In *The Wrecker*, while money does enable
mobility, methods of mobility also generate money in ways that reflect the
significance of this reciprocal relationship to the nineteenth-century global economy.

It is not mobility alone that Stevenson depicts as a central and essential
aspect of economic life in the nineteenth century: speed is also shown to be a vital
force. When Pinkerton and Dodd invest all their money into the wreck of the *Flying
Scud*, they are relying upon the speed of the *Norah Creina* being able to transport
them there before anyone else. Although it turns out not to be the case, Dodd
believes he is racing the *City of Pekin* to the wreck. Speed is at the forefront of his
mind on board the ship: 'the *City of Pekin* flashed into my mind, racing her thirteen
knots for Honolulu' (*Wrecker*, 177). The supposed race, however, is not the only
exigency of speed on this voyage; there is a 'three-month limit' on the credit

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[64] Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 24.

Pinkerton obtained to buy the wreck, increasing the pressure on Dodd to return with

the profit in good time.

In fact, the *Norah Creina* cannot provide the speed required, resulting in a

change of method and loss of profits: 'I had hoped you might have peddled that

opium through the islands, which is safer and more profitable. But with this three-

month limit, you must make tracks for Honolulu straight, and communicate by

steamer' (p. 147). Pinkerton emphasises the significance of speed in this venture,

exclaiming: 'O, if we had just the four months!' (p. 149). Speed and profit, then, are

closely linked. Yet the novel also identifies the dangers that attend this necessity for

fast transport. The captain of the *Norah Creina* explains to Dodd that 'there's many

a fine fellow gone under […] because of drivers like' Pinkerton:

> What do they care for a ship or two? Insured I guess. What do they care
> for sailors' lives alongside of a few thousand dollars? What they want is
> speed between ports, and a damned fool of a captain that'll drive a ship
> under as I'm doing this one […] (p. 189)

Kern explains how 'the pace of life was greatly accelerated' in the late nineteenth

century through 'a broad technological revolution'; however, he also describes the

'sharp debate' that existed 'about the meaning and value of speed'.[65] Here, *The*

Wrecker raises questions about the availability of speed and the ethical responsibility

of using it, depicting the tension between the opportunities and the dangers that fast-

paced transport presents.[66]

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[65] Kern, *Time and Space*, p. 110.
[66] In 1878, before he had experienced the impact of high-speed transport on global travel, Stevenson addressed this tension between technological progress and old ways of life through a different but related modern phenomenon: electricity. In 'A Plea for Gas Lamps', he writes that 'the conservative, while lauding progress, is ever timid of innovation; his is the hand upheld to counsel pause; his is the signal advising slow advance. The word *electricity* now sounds the note of danger. […] a new sort of urban star now shines out nightly, horrible, unearthly, obnoxious to the human eye; a lamp for a nightmare! Such a light as this should shine only on murderers and public crime, or along the corridors of lunatic asylums, a horror to heighten horror'. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Plea for Gas Lamps', in *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers*, ed. by Robert-Louis Abrahmson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 110–12 (p. 112).

Indeed, while the developments in steam ships brought maritime transport into this discussion (and to the forefront of public discourse after the tragedy of the *Titanic* in 1912), it was the railways that provoked most debate in the nineteenth century. Railway historian Ralph Harrington explains that

> [r]ailways could be seen as a symbol of progress, promising economic and social betterment, democracy, energy, freedom from old restrictions, all the benefits and opportunities of the constantly circulating liberty of modern, mechanized civilization. Yet they were also associated with pollution, destruction, disaster and danger, threatening the destabilization and corruption of the social order, the vulgarization of culture, the despoliation of rural beauty, the violence, destruction and terror of the accident.[67]

Despite depicting the railways (and mobility in general) as a symbol of progress and productivity, inextricably tied up with the global capitalism influencing the age, *The Wrecker* does acknowledge the fears associated with such developments. When questioning why the captain of the *Flying Scud* seems tense, Dodd suggests he may not have 'yet recovered from the disaster to his brig', remembering 'how a friend of [his] had been in a railway accident, and shook and started for a month' (p. 126). Carthew's work on the railways involves securing the tracks after heavy flooding, to ensure trains will pass safely through. He describes how 'night and day [...] the telegraph clicked with disastrous news and anxious enquiry' (p. 325). Finding 'in his responsibility both terror and delight' (p. 327), Carthew reflects the ambivalence within nineteenth-century society towards the railways, as they bring both the promise of progress and the potential for catastrophe.

In portraying such fear of disaster, the text participates in a discourse prevalent in literature of the nineteenth century. In Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1848), for example, the new railroad is described as 'a great earthquake' that had

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[67] Ralph Harrington, 'The Railway Journey and the Neuroses of Modernity', in *Pathologies of Travel*, ed. by Richard Wrigley and George Revill (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 229–59 (p. 229).

'rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre'. As it 'trail[s] away smoothly, on its

mighty course of civilisation and improvement', it leaves 'dire disorder' in its wake:

> Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits
> and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up;
> buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of
> wood. […] There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of
> incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing
> in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as
> any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon
> earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene.[68]

Dickens depicts a hazardous scene of chaos, the consequences of the railroad

construction mirroring that of a natural disaster.[69] And while 'the neighbourhood

which had hesitated to acknowledge the railroad in its struggling days' grew 'wise

and pertinent […] and now boasted of its powerful and prosperous relation',[70] the

potential for disaster is not eliminated: the novel's villain, Carker, eventually falls

beneath a train and is killed. Indeed, railway accidents became a regular plot device

in Victorian fiction, particularly in sensation novels. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady

Audley's Secret* (1862) and Wilkie Collins's *No Name* (1862) both follow characters

with parents killed in train accidents, while the adulterous protagonist of Ellen

Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) loses a child and is disfigured after a railway catastrophe.

Such depictions only increased towards the end of the century, when George

M. Beard introduced the diagnostic category of neurasthenia (nervous exhaustion)

and published *American Nervousness* (1881). Beard's list of symptoms for

neurasthenia is over a page and a half long and includes:

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[68] Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1848), p. 46.
[69] Dickens also famously nearly lost his life in a train crash that occurred in Staplehurst, Kent in June 1865, something that haunted him during his remaining years. The following year, he published the ghost story 'The Signal-Man' as part of the portmanteau collection 'Mugby Junction' for the Christmas 1866 issue of *All the Year Round*.
[70] Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, p. 155.

> insomnia, flushing, drowsiness, bad dreams, cerebral irritation, dilated pupils,
> pain, pressure and heaviness in the head, changes in the expression of the
> eye, neurasthenic asthenopia, noises in the ears, atonic voice, mental
> irritability, tenderness of the teeth and gums, […] fear of lightning, or fear of
> responsibility, of open places or of closed places, fear of society, fear of
> being alone, fear of fears […][71]

He claims that 'modern civilization' is the primary cause of the condition, citing

'five elements' in particular: 'steam power, the periodical press, the telegraph, the

sciences, and the mental activity of women'.[72] In the chapter entitled 'Causes of

American Nervousness', there is a section dedicated to 'Railway Travelling', which

is considered to 'have an unfavorable influence on the nervous system'.[73] Kern

suggests this text 'set the tone for the literature on the increasing tempo of life and its

nefarious consequences.'[74]

Although railroads were not new, by the last decade of the nineteenth century

'their hold on political, military, economic, and private life tightened as the railroad

networks thickened'.[75] Emile Zola's *La Bête Humaine* (1890) reflects this in sinister

metaphorical language, terming it 'a huge body, a gigantic being lying across the

earth',[76] while in Frank Norris's *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901) the train

is shown to have 'a stranglehold of iron tentacles on farmers'.[77] In *The Wrecker*,

Stevenson demonstrates an awareness of this anxiety; working on the railways,

Carthew describes one 'scene' that he claims he 'will remember till he dies':

> the train appeared and paused, throwing a Babylonian tower of smoke into
> the rain and oppressing men's hearts with the scream of her whistle. The
> engineer was there himself; he paled as he made the signal: the engine came
> at a foot's pace; but the whole bulk of mountain shook and seemed to nod

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[71] George M. Beard, *American Nervousness* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1881), p. 7.
[72] Beard, *American Nervousness*, p. 96.
[73] Beard, *American Nervousness*, p. 112.
[74] Kern, *Time and Space*, p. 125.
[75] Kern, *Time and Space*, p. 213.
[76] Emile Zola, *La Bête humaine* (1890), trans. as *The Human Beast* (New York: United Book Guild, 1948), p. 51.
[77] Kern, *Time and Space*, p. 213.

seaward, and the watching navvies instinctively clutched at shrubs and trees
[…] (*Wrecker*, 326)

The language here is almost that of gothic horror: the 'tower of smoke' and 'scream'

of the train 'oppressing men's hearts'. Yet, in each of the instances that Carthew

describes, 'fear [is] disappointed; the train passe[s] unscathed' (p. 326). While

Stevenson reflects the anxieties in Victorian society about the increased speed and

prevalence of the railway, the potential for progress triumphs over such unease in

The Wrecker: 'the train cleared the point of danger and shot on' (p. 325).

The fears surrounding these developments in transport are not surprising; the

railroad and other technological developments of the nineteenth century enacted

major changes to the landscape and how people travelled through it. Yet the speed

of this new mobility did not only change how we moved through place: it also

changed the nature of time. Cresswell explains that '[t]ime, thanks to the railroad,

was increasingly rationalized, mechanized, and timetabled as people accustomed

themselves to tickets, labels, luggage, clocks, timetables, and uniforms'.[78] On a

global, governmental scale, the building of the transcontinental railroad (1869) in the

United States influenced how we conceptualise time to this day:

> In 1870 a traveller from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco would have
> passed through over two hundred *time zones*. Every town had their own time,
> tied more or less to the position of the sun in the sky. […] the increased speed
> of the railroad made this dangerous as it became possible for two trains to be
> in the same time and space with potentially fatal consequences. On
> November 18, 1883, the railroad enforced four uniform time zones in the
> United States. In 1884 this was expanded to the globe with the designation of
> Greenwich as the prime meridian and the division of the world into twenty-
> four time zones. [79]

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[78] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 6.
[79] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 6.

It is problems of time upon which the mystery of *The Wrecker* hinges. More specifically, it is evidence of time not conforming to this ordered and precise rationale that alerts Dodd and his crew to the real history of the *Flying Scud*. The *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper that is found in the ship is dated 26 November; the captain explains the continuity error that this presents:

> not thirteen days after this paper appeared in New South Wales, the ship we're standing in heaved her blessed anchors out of China? How did the *Sydney Morning Herald* get to Hong Kong in thirteen days? Trent made no land, he spoke to no ship, till he got here. (*Wrecker*, 212)

Carthew and his company, who are masquerading as the crew of the *Flying Scud*, are equally aware of the danger of this inconsistency in timing: Carthew knows it 'would be asked how he, who had sailed in a schooner from Sydney, had turned up so shortly after in a brig out of Hong Kong' (p. 398). The point is highly significant: Carthew is adopting the identity of a man who *had* sailed out of Hong Kong in order to conceal the man's murder. In a world where time is rationalised and ordered, where the time zones of countries fit together to create a global consensus of correct, accurate time, this inconsistency is the only valid piece of evidence that drives the mystery of *The Wrecker*.

Indeed, considering the perpetual movement of the narrative and the lack of interest in the Pacific environment, alongside its preoccupation with transport, mobility and speed, I would argue that *time* is more significant than *place* in *The Wrecker*. Although it does provide snapshots of certain places – Stevenson was 'very proud' of 'the picture of San Francisco' (*Letters*, VI, 376) – the overarching impression from the book is of a time, an era, rather than a narrative centred on place. This is certainly how Stevenson himself describes the novel: in the epilogue, he explains how the authors chose to dwell on '[t]he tone of the age, its movement,

the mingling of races and classes in the dollar hunt, the fiery and not quite romantic struggle for existence with its changing trades and scenery' (*Wrecker*, 405). Whereas he christens 'The Beach of Falesá' 'sixteen pages of the South Seas: their essence' (*Letters*, VII, 155), Stevenson does not claim a 'place' for *The Wrecker*. He sees its value, instead, in its portrayal of the age, terming it 'full of the unrest and movement of our century' (*Wrecker*, 404). In a letter to Baxter in 1891, he asserted: 'it is certainly well nourished with facts; no realist can touch me there; for by this time I do begin to know something of life in the XIXth century' (*Letters*, VII, 192).

It is the modernity of the nineteenth century that is illuminated in *The Wrecker*: the dynamisms of global capitalism and the intense mobility which it supports and requires. The resultant text is episodic, fractured, moving between continents and narratives at breakneck speed, pausing briefly to offer snapshots of people and places before hurtling on, an epitome of 'the unrest and movement of [the] century' (p. 404). No wonder it divided opinion in Britain and continues to disorient people with its lack of coherence and 'haphazard' narrative.[80] It is these structural aspects that Hammond considers 'the weaknesses of the book',[81] and which were seen by some contemporary critics as the result of a 'faulty design' (*CH*, 397). In fact, it is not only in its content but also through its structure that *The Wrecker* characterises the dynamic forces shaping the late nineteenth century, just as it was simultaneously written about and produced within these shifting global networks. It is the time–space compression of globalisation that enabled Stevenson to travel to and publish from the Pacific. In *The Wrecker*, the mobile forces of

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[80] Harman, *Stevenson*, pp. 386–387.
[81] Hammond, *Companion*, p. 173.

modernity are compressed into one sporadic, nomadic novel: an unsettling insight

into the changing global landscape of the late nineteenth century.

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In 1891, the editor of *Revue Scientifique* wrote that 'to say that there are no longer

distances is to utter a very banal truth'.[82] The rapid developments in transport and

communication technology in the late nineteenth century were changing the way

people conceived of time and space, and changing their relationships with other parts

of the world. Stevenson channelled his by now extensive experiences of travel into

The Wrecker, but the book is less of a guide through place than a record of the

changing pace of life in the final decades of the century. It depicts not the

experiences of people settled in places but the ways in which people move through

them, and how they negotiate the new opportunities of mobility. Writing to Colvin in

October 1891, Stevenson described *The Wrecker* as 'a tough long yarn with some

pictures of the manners of today in the greater world – not the shoddy sham world of

cities, clubs and colleges' (*Letters*, VII, 181). The world of cities, clubs and colleges

to which Stevenson used to belong is here measured against the life that he had

experienced since leaving Europe. His cynical assessment of this 'shoddy sham

world' was not only directed at the lives his friends still led but at his earlier career

and literary works, produced as they were in the midst of these 'clubs and colleges',

in the central city for literary production. A month later he wrote to Baxter, declaring

'no realist [could] touch' *The Wrecker* for 'facts': 'for by this time I do begin to

know something of life in the XIXth century, which no novelist either in France or

England seems to know much of' (*Letters*, VII, 192).

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[82] Charles Richet, 'Dans Cent Ans', *Revue Scientifique*, 48 (1891), 737–85 (p. 780).

Stevenson suggests that he is more qualified to write about the world as he has seen more of it, that he knows more of the nineteenth century because he has made use of the great advancements in transports and communication that were shaping the age. I have demonstrated how *The Wrecker*, possibly more than any of his other works, was produced within these changing conditions, relying upon the advances of modernity to transport the authors and the writing across the world. We cannot, of course, claim a straightforward correlation between the intense mobility of the writing and production processes and the fractured, nomadic narrative, with its focus on the financial opportunities of transport and mobility. As I have demonstrated, however, the parallels do exist and are worth noting. At the very least, the challenges Stevenson faced with such a fragmented and mobile publishing process would have made him particularly sensitive to the networks of transport and communication connecting continents, to the risks and opportunities they presented. I suggest that the conditions in which Stevenson was writing and publishing are echoed in *The Wrecker*: in its mobile narrative, its interest in issues of literary production, its focus on transport and speed, and the money-making potential they provide. While I have argued that place is less significant than movement and time in the text, it is nonetheless a book of both its time and place, reflecting the concerns of an itinerant, nineteenth-century author publishing his first novel from the Pacific.

Although Lloyd Osbourne claimed that *The Wrecker* generated regular royalties in the years following Stevenson's death, Stevenson himself was disappointed with the initial sales of the book in America. He wrote to Burlingame in June 1893:

> It is scarcely necessary for me to refer again to the business of *The Wrecker* – it so heartbreaking a disappointment. The one point on which my mind is made up […] is that we shall have no more royalties for the States. A sum

down will have to be agreed upon for every book you shall publish in the future […] (*Letters*, VIII, 105–06)

In the same letter he told Burlingame that he intends 'the whole of [his] business to pass through [Baxter's] hands in the future'. Since Stevenson's arrival in the Pacific Baxter had indeed adopted (or been assigned) a more significant role in the author's affairs. He had been Stevenson's solicitor for years, dealing with his personal and financial business, but from 1891 he began to act as Stevenson's literary agent. As detailed above, *The Wrecker* was sent directly to the editor, but this was not the case with many of his other works from the region. In October 1891, Stevenson sent Baxter the manuscript of 'The Beach of Falesá', with instructions for him to deal with McClure and the prices he should accept, writing: 'awfully sorry to bother you with this; but McC is so little of a businessman and so much of a splasher, that I do not care to send him the copy direct' (VII, 177–78). Baxter's first experience of negotiating publishing contracts went well: by December he had signed an agreement giving McClure serial rights to the story for all countries for £500 (VII, 178).

The ensuing conflict surrounding 'The Beach of Falesá' has been well documented, by Barry Menikoff and many others.[83] The story was first published in the *Illustrated London News* in six instalments between 2 July and 6 August 1892. In January 1892, Stevenson received a request from S. S. McClure's brother, Robert McClure, to alter the story so that the native character Uma and the trader Wiltshire should be properly married, removing the fraudulent marriage contract that stated: 'Uma daughter of Fa'avao of Falesa island […] is illegally married to Mr John Wiltshire for one night, and Mr John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell next

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[83] Barry Menikoff, *Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Beach of Falesá': A Study in Victorian Publishing, with the Original Text* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 1984)

morning.'[84] Stevenson refused to alter the wording, claiming it was an authentic replica of a marriage contract he had witnessed during his voyages through the islands. Nevertheless, as Neil Rennie explains, the editor of the *Illustrated London News* believed that

> [he] had responsibilities which were more important than 'the feelings of an author, however great', and Stevenson's story first appeared […] with the text of the marriage certificate omitted […], as Stevenson discovered when he received a copy of the first instalment of the story.[85]

When Cassell & Company published the story in *Island Nights' Entertainments* (1893) they were also reluctant to include the contract; Stevenson compromised by replacing the length of time before Uma could be sent 'to hell' from a night to a week.

The resistance he experienced from publishers on this issue represents a broader hostility towards the turn to realism that Stevenson's fiction took after *The Wrecker*. Just as *In the South Seas* explores the negative impact of colonialism on island cultures, 'The Beach of Falesá' and *The Ebb-Tide* both portray the pernicious influence of Western involvement in the Pacific: Stevenson wrote of 'The Beach of Falesá' that 'all that is ugly is in the whites' (*Letters*, VII, 288). As Jolly explains, when Stevenson moved to the Pacific, British and American readers 'generally expected that [he] would continue producing the kinds of romances and fantasies with which he had won his fame; when he did not, […] reactions were mostly negative'.[86] *The Ebb-Tide*, another collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, was considered sordidly realistic, so much so that Colvin recommended withholding it

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[84] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Beach of Falesá', in *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 11.
[85] Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 217.
[86] Roslyn Jolly, 'Introduction', in Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, pp. ix–xxxiii (p. xxix).

from publication in book form (*CH*, 449). Luckily, it was now Baxter who dealt with issues of publication, writing to inform Stevenson of the decision 'to publish *Ebb-Tide* as a volume': 'Colvin don't like it but other people do and even if they don't like it when they buy it you are too well established for it do any harm' (*Letters*, VIII, 256). Stevenson's response demonstrates how far he had come from the early days of his career, when he sought out Colvin's advice and approval:

> I am glad to hear you have arranged for the publication of *The Ebb-Tide*. Colvin (between ourselves) is a bit of an old wife, and has so often predicted that a book would be my ruin in January, and by July defied me to do anything as good, that I have ceased to pay very much regard […] (VIII, 256)

The objections to the *Ebb-Tide* that Colvin feared did indeed come. Maixner explains that 'what most startled and displeased reviewers […] was the complete absence of "romance", the unrelieved presence of harsh and unpleasant realities, of the horrible and the grotesque'. In September 1894, a review in *The Speaker* lamented that 'of grace, virtue, beauty, we get no glimpse' (*CH*, 450). By comparison, *The Wrecker* was a success: it retained enough romance through its brief glimpses of Pacific life and did not dwell on the sordid details of colonialism. Yet, while it does not offer the imperial critique that has distinguished Stevenson's other Pacific fiction, nobody can deny the contemporaneity of *The Wrecker*. Described by Stevenson himself as 'a tale of a caste so modern', today we can read the book as a reflection of the changes shaping world at the end of the nineteenth century: a testament to both the evolving mobility of the age as well the relentless mobility that defined Stevenson's life.

Conclusion

Home, at Last

Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.[1]

Robert Louis Stevenson died in his Samoan home Vailima on 4 December 1894.

These words, taken from his poem 'Requiem', mark the place he was buried, on the

summit of Mount Vaea in Upolu, Samoa.[2] While commemorating Stevenson's life,

this inscription also highlights a complex issue for the author, one that I will consider

in this conclusion and which remained unresolved until his death: the subject of

home. In this thesis, I have explored how, from the earliest textual traces of his life,

Stevenson can be seen to articulate a desire for mobility, and acted on this inclination

to spend much of his adult life on the move. Adopting an approach that views the

ideas and meanings in Stevenson's texts as intimately bound up with their

geographic histories of production, my aim has been to demonstrate, in more detail

than previous studies of the author, the significance of mobility to his literary works.

In particular, this thesis has examined the conditions of mobility specific to the late

nineteenth century, how these are explored in Stevenson's writing and how they

helped shape the eventual production of his texts. Such an approach enables us to

read Stevenson's works as both literary texts and material objects that offer insights

into the dynamic forces of modernity influencing the world at this time, as they

demonstrate the impact of technological developments on places and populations,

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[1] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Collected Poems*, ed. by Roger C. Lewis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 88.
[2] The inscription on Stevenson's grave contains an additional 'the': 'home from *the* sea' in the third line.

mobility and globalisation, cultural practices and attitudes towards national

belonging. His works are more, however, than historical records providing

information on the age. It is the author's willingness to travel in thought (as well as

in person) away from conventions of nineteenth-century British society that

produces the most meaningful insights in his writing. Whether he is questioning

national belonging in his Californian writing, challenging conventional Western

perspectives of the Pacific in *In the South Seas* or offering an understanding of the

world as a single, unified and intensely mobile system in *The Wrecker*, Stevenson's

most radical or insightful works challenged some of his readers – a fact evident in

the vexed production histories of many of his texts. Even by today's standards some

of these ideas seem distinctly progressive and modern, ensuring not only the

historical value of Stevenson's works, but the continued relevance of his writing to

the issues facing our own imperfect, global society.

The majority of my study, then, has focused on Robert Louis Stevenson in a

specifically international context. In this conclusion, however, I wish to begin by

considering Stevenson and Scotland, returning to ideas examined most closely in

Chapter One, which looked at the author's negotiation of his first years with British

literary society. This chapter considered the author's ambivalent relationship with his

home town of Edinburgh, evident throughout his life, but particularly striking during

his early years of authorship as he attempted to succeed in the London literary world.

The inscription on Stevenson's grave, therefore, attempts to simplify what was a

complex and lifelong issue for the author: where did Stevenson really 'long to be'?

Where is 'home' for a man who so frequently professes and demonstrates his

commitment to a mobile life? Only months before his death, Stevenson had

declared his wish to be laid to rest in the Pacific, announcing to an audience of

Samoan chiefs: 'I have chosen it [Samoa] to be my home while I live, and my grave after I am dead.'[3] This statement could be read as an answer to such questions. Indeed, Ann C. Colley has argued that 'the way [Stevenson] located or defined home' changed during his last years in Samoa, when 'the seemingly alien culture and setting of the South Seas were to emerge as the more powerfully orienting components of his experience'.[4] She identifies Stevenson's manipulation of land in Samoa, through the construction of Vailima, as a crucial factor in this change:

> The floors of 'Vailima' were made of imported California Redwood, but, significantly, were stained with native dyes. The indigenous finish throughout 'Vailima' reflected a new and radiant meaning of a home that was not entirely dependent upon the domination of things Scottish. 'Vailima' became the seat of Stevenson's new authority and direction – a consequence that suggests that for Stevenson this place could really be home because he had authority here.[5]

This interpretation corresponds with geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's understanding of how the attachment between people and the earth is built through the making of places as 'home'. As Tuan writes, '[h]umans transform environments into worlds, nature into homes' and through this process 'the materially altered landscape itself immediately acquires symbolic resonance', which we understand as 'home'.[6] Stevenson certainly embraced the challenge of building Vailima: in a letter to his stepson in October 1890, he described 'the delights and pains' of clearing 'a path single handed in tropical bush, with a blunt knife, with sweat running in your eyes', before telling R. D. Blackmore the same month: 'this work seizes and enthrals me; I would rather do a good hour's work weeding […] than write two pages of my best' (*Letters*, VII, 15, 18).

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[3] *Address to Samoan Chief, Vailima* (New York: S. S. McClure, 1895).
[4] Ann C. Colley, 'Locating Home', *JSS*, 8 (2011), 234–44 (p. 236).
[5] Colley, 'Locating Home', p. 240.
[6] Yi-Fu Tuan, 'A View of Geography', *Geographical Review*, 81 (1991), 99–107 (pp. 103, 102).

Such a conception of home, however, does not easily account for consistently mobile people. Indeed, as Tim Cresswell suggests, 'Tuan's world is full of edifices […] that point towards place as an essentially moral concept', the implication being that 'mobility and movement, insofar as they undermine attachment and commitment, are antithetical to moral worlds.'[7] Home, then, is inevitably more complex for a person who moved as much as Stevenson. Even when writing to Henry James in August 1890 of his intention to settle in the Pacific, it is not the appeal of building a home there that he cited, but the continued mobility life in the islands would facilitate:

> The sea, islands, the islanders, the island life and climate, make and keep me truly happier. These last two years I have been much at sea, and I have never wearied, sometimes I have indeed grown impatient for some destination; more often I was sorry that the voyage drew so early to an end; and never once did I lose my fidelity to blue water and a ship. It is plain then that for me, my exile to the place of schooners and islands can be in no sense regarded as a calamity. (*Letters*, VI, 403)

This letter was written in Sydney following Stevenson's third cruise of the Pacific on the *Janet Nicoll*. And while sent only a month before he and his family settled permanently in Samoa (the land of Vailima was being prepared for them during the cruise), this letter testifies to Stevenson's continued desire for movement rather than stasis, for the opportunities of travel a home in the Pacific would provide.

It may, as Colley suggests, have been the building and furnishing of Vailima, rather than the purchasing, that made it truly *home* for Stevenson. His commitment to Samoa in the last years of his life cannot be questioned, as shown by his involvement in and efforts to influence the colonial and national politics affecting the island. It appears, however, that this commitment to his new environment, perhaps his belief that he had finally 'settled down', did not produce a

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[7] Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 15.

straightforward sense of being at home but rather inspired further questions for the author on the nature of home and belonging. While the gravestone inscription suggests Stevenson 'longed' for Samoa, the letters in the last volume of Booth and Mehew's collection, written by the author during the final two years of his life, reveal a strong yearning for Scotland. Even as, in a letter from September 1893, he encouraged Colvin to visit Vailima and see his 'tomb that is to be', Stevenson admitted it was 'a wrench not be planted in Scotland', declaring: 'Singular that I should fulfil the Scots Destiny throughout, and live a voluntary exile, and have my head filled with the blessed, beastly place all the time' (VIII, 159). Indeed, while Stevenson would often reminisce about Scotland over the course of his peripatetic life, or be transported back imaginatively when some familiarity struck him,[8] it is particularly striking how he returns to it again and again in his letters from this late period of his life. In May 1893, he wrote to Colvin describing the 'very unusual kind of weather' Samoa was experiencing:

> It pours with rain from the westward; I was standing out on the little verandah in front of my room this morning, and there went through me or over me a heave of extraordinary and apparently baseless emotion. I literally staggered. And then the explanation came, and I knew I had found a frame of mind and body that belonged to Scotland, and particularly to the neighbourhood of Callander. Very odd these identities of sensation, and the world of connotations implied. (*Letters*, VIII, 91)

The concept of doubling that is so significant in Stevenson's most celebrated book *Jekyll and Hyde* is evident here: his self is divided into the one living in Samoa and one 'that belonged in Scotland'. It is not only the 'mind' but the 'body' that experiences this bisection; the experience of feeling himself transported to Scotland

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[8] In *The Amateur Emigrant*, Stevenson describes seeing the mountains of California and feeling he 'had come home again' (p. 119), while *In the South Seas* identifies numerous 'points of similarity between a South Sea people' and the 'Scots folk of the Highlands' (pp. 12, 13).

is physical, produced by the 'identities of sensation' that connect him bodily to the country of his birth while on the other side of the world.

The prominent position Scotland occupied in Stevenson's consciousness during this time could have been linked to his awareness that he would never return to the country. Writing to his fellow Scottish novelist S. R. Crockett in May 1893, he declared:

> I shall never take that walk by the Fisher's Tryst and Glencorse; I shall never see Auld Reekie; I shall never set foot again upon the heather. Here I am until I die, and here I will be buried. The word is out and the doom written. Or, if I do come, it will be a voyage to a further goal, and in fact a suicide; which, however, if I could get my family all fixed up in the money way, I might perform, or attempt. (VIII, 75)

The letters I have cited so far, all sent within a five-month period, reveal Stevenson's preoccupation with the city and country of his birth, even while he oversaw the finishing touches made to his estate in Samoa. Yet this final letter also indicates the ambivalence that characterised the author's relationship with Scotland throughout his life. The memories of Edinburgh that fill Stevenson's letters from the Pacific are tempered with a sense that the city he loved could not accommodate him and that, upon returning, he would wish to be elsewhere. Such ambivalence is captured within one paragraph in a letter he sent to Henley in 1890:

> Remember me to my birth street; I feel as if I could not bear to go there, or round the back way by the Cemetery, or up the Broughton road; something would snap. […] Your little girl will have some common stuff with me; some strings tuned to mine, in harmony at least, perhaps unison; I hope not or she will flee that neighbourhood when she is forty as if it were the ruins of the eternal city of God: almost nothing saddens me, but to recall such places. (VI, 365)

The intense emotions that memories of Edinburgh inspire in Stevenson are a testament to his deep connection with the city: his 'strings' are 'tuned' to the place. Yet the sensations described are not positive; it may be the 'city of God' but it is in 'ruins', and while it 'saddens' him to recall it he is not sure he could 'bear' to return.

While such sentiment is of course linked to his delicate health and the harsh Scottish

climate, I argue that at its root lies the conflict between his seemingly innate desire

for mobility and his affection for his home town. While Edinburgh undoubtedly

exercised a strong hold over Stevenson, he also longed to move through and

experience the world. He articulated this discord within him many years earlier

when, in his first book *An Inland Voyage,* he reflected on the idyllic existence of life

on a barge: 'There should be many contented spirits on board, for such a life is both

to travel and to stay at home.' (*IV*, p. 8)

> Over twenty-five years after Stevenson's death, Edmund Gosse reflected on

this conflict within the author in his address to the first annual dinner of the Robert

Louis Stevenson Club. He proclaimed that Stevenson 'was not very happy in

Edinburgh, and yet not perfectly happy anywhere else':

> He was severe on the climate and architecture of Edinburgh […] He shrank
> from the cold, for he was delicate; and he shrank from the somewhat
> excessive piety which surrounded him. But he loved Edinburgh with a
> passionate love, and in the tropical atmosphere of Samoa he was always
> longing to go back to the Gray Metropolis of the North.[9]

As Gosse's address from 1920 reveals, Stevenson's ambivalent relationship with

Scotland and his decision to leave the country was still being discussed years after

his death, and it continues to influence his legacy today. Penny Fielding describes

how, 'perhaps because of his peripatetic writing career, Stevenson is not generally

typed as an iconic Scottish author, in the way that his predecessors Robert Burns and

Walter Scott have been.'[10] Richard Hill argues that the Writer's Museum in

Edinburgh exemplifies this difference:

> Devoted to three great Scottish writers, Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott and
> Stevenson, it is clear that Stevenson's place in this museum, while merited, is

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[9] Edmund Gosse, 'Address to the First Annual Dinner of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club, 13th
November 1920', in *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Rosaline Masson (London:
Chambers, 1925), pp. 72–76 (p. 75).
[10] Penny Fielding (ed.), 'Introduction', in *EC*, pp. 1–10 (p. 7).

much more complex, because Scotland can only lay partial claim to Stevenson's personality; Burns and Scott, by comparison, were both born and buried in Scotland, and existed in a time in which regionality could, to a greater degree, help contextualize their lives and works.

Stevenson, however, lived during an age when increasingly rapid mobility could complicate an individual's personal identity: as Hill states, with people 'less and less tied to a particular place or set of values, it was becoming more difficult to reconcile oneself with any singular, regional identity'.[11]

Indeed, during his years in the Pacific, Stevenson built a new identity among the people there: he became 'Tusitala', a Samoan 'teller of tales'. 'The Bottle Imp', which was translated into Samoan by the Revd A. E. Claxton and published under the title 'O Le Fagu Aitu' in *O Le Sulu Samoa* (The Samoan Torch), was, according to Stevenson, 'designed and written for a Polynesian audience' (*Letters*, VII, 95, 31). As well as writing the Pacific into much of his fiction, in his final years Stevenson spent much time and effort attempting to influence and raise awareness of the political situation in Samoa. He sent frequent letters to *The Times* about the conflict between the three colonial powers and the indigenous Samoan factions, and was squarely in favour of Samoan home rule. It was to this end that he wrote and secured publication of *A Footnote to History* (1892) and, despite predicting it would 'bloom unread in shop windows', concluded 'well, it can't be helped, and it must be done' (*Letters*, VII, 220, 218). No wonder his status as an iconic Scottish author is less secure than that of his predecessors, his mobility complicating any region's unequivocal claim to his writing.

As well as influencing his legacy as a Scottish author, Stevenson's reputation as an itinerant writer may have also contributed to the lack of critical attention he

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[11]Richard J. Hill (ed.), 'Introduction', in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1–10 (p. 2).

received in comparison with many of his contemporaries. As Ian Duncan explains, in 1948 'F. R. Leavis excluded him from "the great tradition of the English novel"', and 'while the international popularity of *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* remains unshaken, Stevenson's absence from standard surveys and field anthologies appears to confirm his relegation by academic scholars and critics to the status of a minor author'.[12] He goes on to quote Leonard Woolf, who in 1924 'remarked on the "headlong fall" of Stevenson's once-exalted reputation in the generation since his death.' Duncan argues that the 'fall really became headlong with the onset of modernism',[13] an idea affirmed by Edwin Muir's 1931 declaration that 'in the general eclipse of Victorian reputation, no one possibly has suffered more than Stevenson'.[14]

The relative lack of serious recognition Stevenson received in the century following his death can be linked to his itinerancy. As I have explored in this study, one of the central ways the modern Western world considers mobility is to see it as a potential threat, a disorder within the system that needs to be controlled, and this approach is evident from the arbiters of serious 'culture' in the first half of the twentieth century. Alongside the writing of F. R. Leavis and Matthew Arnold,[15] T. S. Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1949) is one of the foundational texts of the conservative 'Culture and Society' tradition: it argues that culture is persevered through a strong attachment to region and place.[16] Eliot views culture as

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[12] Ian Duncan, 'Stevenson and Fiction', in *EC*, pp. 11–26 (p. 11).
[13] Duncan, 'Stevenson and Fiction', p. 12.
[14] Edwin Muir, 'Robert Louis Stevenson', in *Edwin Muir: Uncollected Scottish Criticism*, ed. by Andrew Noble (London: Vision, 1982), p. 228.
[15] F. R. Leavis, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1930); Mathew Arnold and John Dover Wilson, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).
[16] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge 2006), p. 32.

dependent on roots and tradition, arguing that 'each area should have its

characteristic culture'.[17] It is therefore

> important that a man should feel himself to be, not merely a citizen of a
> particular nation, but a citizen of a particular part of his country, with local
> loyalties. […] On the whole, it would appear to be for the best that the great
> majority of human beings should go on living in the place in which they were
> born. Family, class and local loyalty all support each other; and if one of
> these decays, the others will suffer also.[18]

Although he himself had travelled from the US to settle in Britain, the idea of mobile

people disturbs Eliot, for whom culture depends on roots and stability. His

observations are, as Cresswell explains, similar to those of 'Yi-Fu Tuan when he

argues that "Modern man" might be so mobile he can never establish roots, and that

his experience of place may consequently be all too superficial.'[19] Mobile people

present a problem, and the recognition and legacy of a mobile author such as

Stevenson, whose contribution to culture cannot be neatly mapped onto a single

region, whose writing does not work to secure 'local loyalties' or build the

'characteristic culture' of an area, perhaps suffers as a result.

       In a letter written a year before his death, Stevenson himself appeared to

predict or at least recognise the possibility that his works would fall in critical

esteem. Writing to his old schoolfriend H. B. Baildon, he declared:

> Yes, if I could die just now, or say in half a year, I should have had a splendid
> time of it on the whole. But it gets a little stale and my work begins to senesce;
> and parties begin to shy bricks at me; and now it begins to look as if I should
> survive to see myself impotent and forgotten. (*Letters*, VIII, 243)

In fact, while his writing received less serious academic recognition than some of his

peers in the following century, his person was anything but forgotten. As Roslyn

Jolly states, after Stevenson's death the view began to circulate that 'whatever be the

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[17] T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 2014), p. 53.
[18] Eliot, *Definition of Culture*, p. 51.
[19] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 33.

final estimate of his literary work, his own life was his greatest achievement.' She

suggests that this idea 'heightened his celebrity status but at the expense of his

reputation as a writer, with the result that throughout the twentieth century

biographies of Stevenson greatly outnumbered critical studies of his works.'[20] In this

way, it could be argued that interest in Stevenson's life has obscured the merits of

his literary work. In this study, by contrast, I have argued that it is by considering the

two together that we can best understand Stevenson's contribution to literature,

recognise his insights into the changes shaping the world at the time and explore the

relevance of his ideas in the twenty-first century.

For Stevenson did not just write about the changing world of the late

nineteenth century, viewing it from a static position and telling second-hand tales: he

also experienced it. Taking advantage of the opportunities afforded to him by

developments in transport and communication, Stevenson's life and works capture

the onset of the dynamic modernity we recognise today. Questions of mobility are at

the heart of reading Stevenson: whether considering his own life or the production of

his texts, the topics they explore or the manner in which they were written, close

examination raises many of the concerns still at the forefront of global politics today.

We may live in an era of globalisation, but for many people and in many ways,

mobility is more restricted now than it was for Stevenson. As Reece Jones explains,

it was after World War One that international systems requiring passports and visas

became widespread, and in 'the second half of the twentieth century, one of the last

bastions of free movement, the high seas, was carved up at the United Nations

through the creation of the Law of the Sea'.[21] This agreement, signed in 1982,

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[20] Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 173.
[21] Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (London: Verso, 2016), p. 7.

extended the jurisdiction of states from within three nautical miles of their coast to as far as 350 nautical miles, dramatically extending states' claims to resources while restricting movement in 44 percent of the world's oceans. And as we approach the third decade of the twenty-first century, the movement of people looks set to remain one of the most contentious issues on the global agenda.

Over the past five years, the United States elected a president who campaigned on building a wall along its southern border and a total ban on Muslim immigration; the United Kingdom government created an Immigration Taskforce to reduce the number of migrants while the country voted to leave the European Union; in France, the anti-immigration party the National Front (renamed 'National Rally' in 2018) is increasingly successful in the polls; the Hungarian government responded to the influx of refugees from Syria by building a razor-wire fence on its border; while in January 2019, Brazil elected as its president a former military officer, Jair Bolsonaro, who campaigned on a pro-white, anti-indigenous platform. In countries across the world, right-wing nationalist parties are increasingly gaining popular support. Within this context of hardening views towards refugees and migrants, there are more displaced people in the world than ever before. Reece Jones states that, in '2014, the UN reported 59.5 million displaced people globally, almost double the count in 2005 and the largest number ever.' In 2019, that number has risen to 68.5 million, with the UN Refugee Agency reporting that 'nearly 1 person is forcibly displaced every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution'.[22] As Jones notes, 'these figures do not even consider the millions more who move for economic or environmental reasons, in search of a better life for themselves and their family.' The

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[22] UNHCR, 'Figures at a Glance', *UNHCR* <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> [accessed 15 April 2019].

increasing numbers of displaced people coupled with a growing ideology of

nationalism and fear of 'outsiders' has fatal consequences: 'according to the

International Organization for Migration, an estimated 40,000 people died

attempting to cross a border between 2005 and 2014'.[23]

Yet alongside this rise in exclusivist values and politics, there are scholars

and politicians advocating for dramatic changes to immigration control. In 2015,

Marc Jahr, the former director of the New York City Housing Development

Corporation, and David Laitin, professor of political science, put forward the idea of

encouraging Syrian refugees to resettle in Detroit, which has infrastructure and

housing built for a far larger population than it currently has.[24] Similarly, owing to

an ageing population and fall in birth rates, former advisor to the European

Commission, Phillip Legrain, put forward the economic case for opening Europe's

borders to migrants.[25] Geographer Joseph Nevins goes further, arguing that, in order

to truly address global wealth inequality, there 'is a need for a radical redefinition of

what the nation-state is'. This is necessary because

> in its present form, control of movement across its territorial boundaries is one of
> its fundamental attributes. What this redefinition might look like is an open
> question, but at the very least it should embrace the ideal of all people regardless
> of national origins, having a right to work and reside within the boundaries of
> any nation-state.[26]

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[23] Jones, *Violent Borders*, p. 4.
[24] David Laitin and Marc Jahr, 'Let Syrians Settle Detroit', *New York Times*, 14 May 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/opinion/let-syrians-settle-detroit.html> [accessed 18 April 2019].
[25] Phillip Legrain, 'Open up Europe! Let Migrants In', *New York Times*, 6 May 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/06/opinion/open-up-europe-let-migrants-in.html> [accessed 18 April 2019].
[26] Joseph Nevins, 'Policing Mobility: Maintaining Global Apartheid—from South Africa to the United States,' in *Beyond Walls and Cages: Bridging Immigrant Justice and Anti-Prison Organizing in the United States*, ed. by Jenna M. Loyd, Matt Mitchelson and Andrew Burridge (Athens, GA: Univiersity of Georgia Press, 2012), pp. 19–26 (p. 25).

Radical as it might seem to us in the twenty-first century, this was an idea Stevenson considered, albeit briefly, in 1884. Following his journey to and across America with emigrants, Stevenson reflected: 'I think we all belong to many countries. And perhaps this habit of much travel, and the engendering of scattered friendships, may prepare the euthanasia of ancient nations.' (*SS*, 203)

While this most progressive insight was but a fleeting thought in *The Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson did question and undermine the certainties of national identity throughout his career. In his early European travel writing it was his own nationality that was scrutinised and unsettled; while in his writing from America and the Pacific, national identity was frequently presented as fluid and unstable, its relevance and validity undermined in a globalised world. Indeed, reflecting on the most serious issues facing the modern world, these late nineteenth-century texts seem surprisingly relevant. In the writings discussed in this project, Stevenson moves from depicting the suspicion directed at mobile people in small communities in Europe, to exploring the motivations and struggles of economic migrants travelling to and through the US, to denouncing the prejudices and discrimination directed at the Chinese within the cosmopolitan communities of the American West. He ranges from questioning the nation state in a mobile age to denouncing the effects on Pacific island populations that such mobility facilitated, before depicting the essentially unified, entirely interlinked nature of the globe, driven by an intensely mobile capitalist system. The complex issues the world faces today are inherited from the age in which Stevenson lived and wrote, and they are discernible in the literary works he produced. Equally, the itinerant writing and publishing practices engendering these works were enabled by the same technological developments that cultivated our own globalised societies. As material

objects and as literary texts, the works of Robert Louis Stevenson provide insights

into how people interacted with and reacted to the changes shaping a shifting global

environment, as the world negotiated a politics of mobility that is still being

contested today.

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